Commentary

Volume Eighty, Number One, July 1985

Nicaraguan Harvest
Mark Falcoff

The Politics of Yiddish
Ruth R. Wisse

Out of the Drawer & Into the West
Fernanda Eberstadt

Operation Moses
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Allen Ginsberg Then and Now
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Gifted and Talented—A Story
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Yesterday's America of Tomorrow
Jeffrey Hart

Books in Review
Leslie Lenkowsky / James Nuechterlein / David Singer / David Blair / William Kristol

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Commentary

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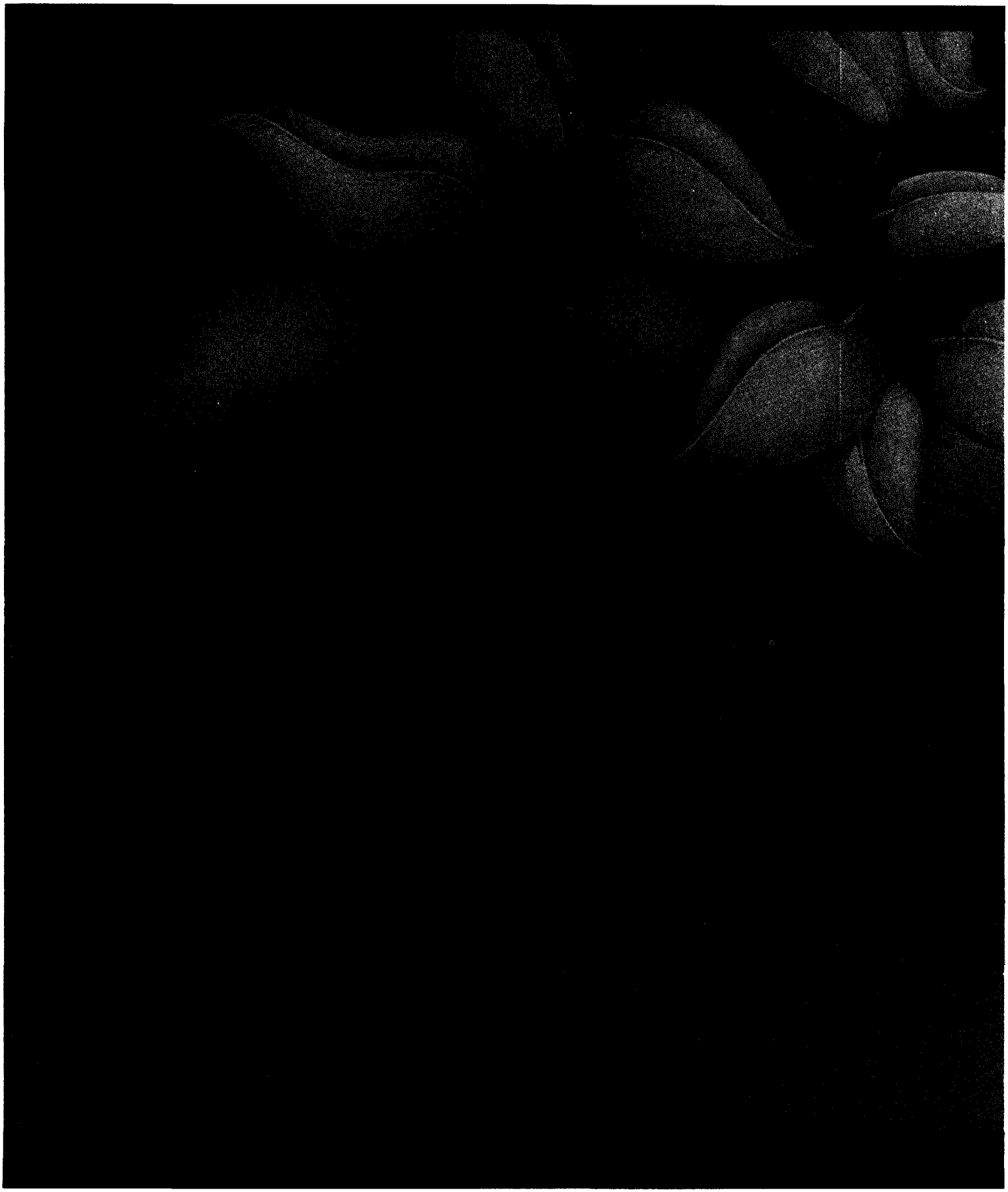

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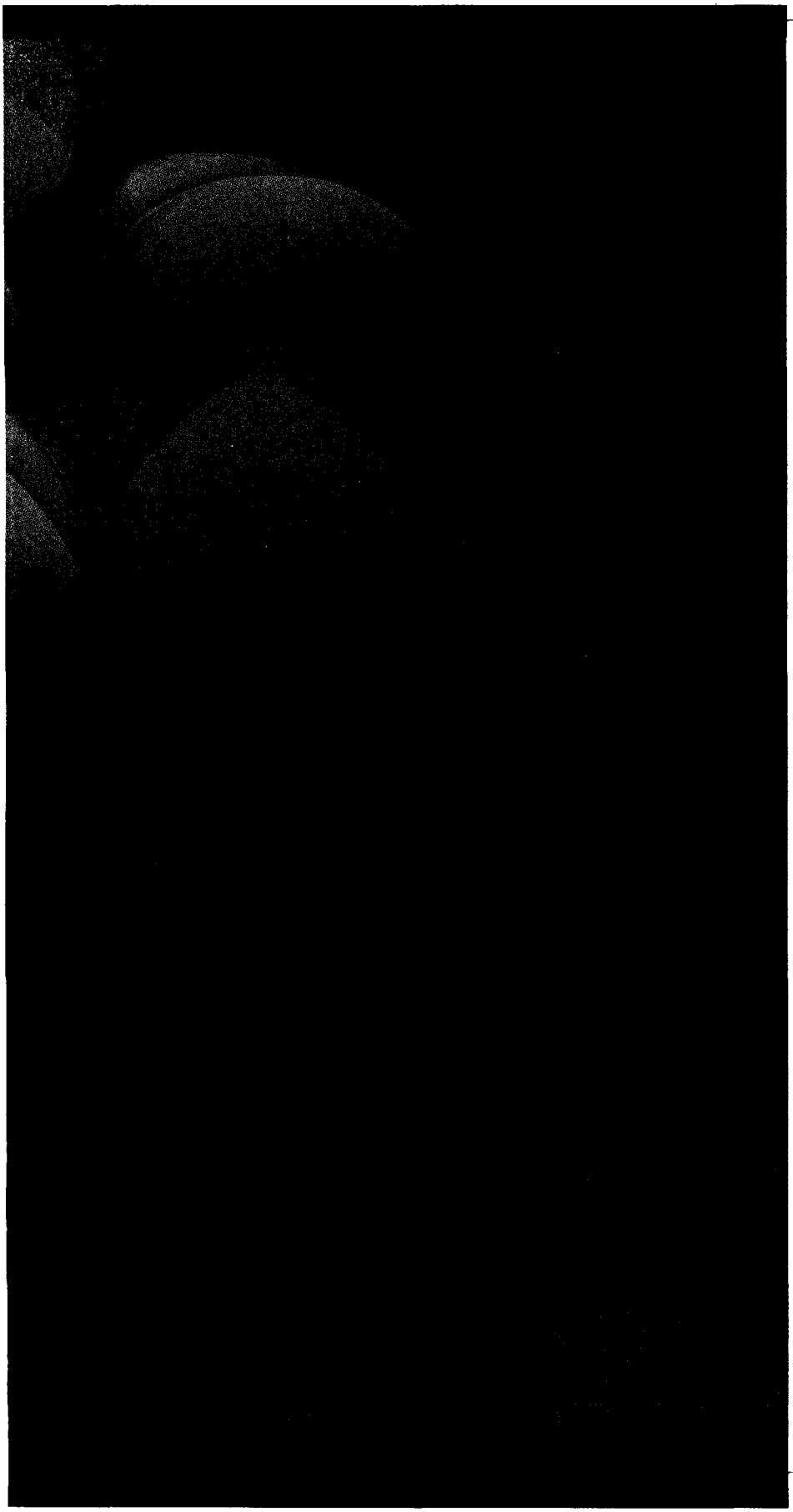

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Too often, "systems integration" turns out to mean buying more of a

continued on next page

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continued from preceding page

particular vendor's products. At the core of some proposals is an open-ended commitment to a single supplier.

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◇

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An integrated office system shouldn't have to mean junking products you already own. Nor a shotgun wedding with a single supplier.

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Letters from Readers

Israel's Economy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

To resolve "Israel's Economic Crisis," Stuart E. Eizenstat tells us "What Israel Must Do" and Steven L. Spiegel "What the U.S. Can Do" [April]. But these articles neither complement each other nor form a synthesis. Their disparate views of the strategic relationship between the U.S. and Israel and the remedies they offer to remove the causes of the present crisis read like a tale of two countries.

Mr. Eizenstat sees Israel, "albeit a valiant ally," as a developing country living beyond its means which can solve its problems only by applying painful measures. Mr. Spiegel, on the other hand, sees Israel as a nation at war, an important strategic ally which also safeguards American national interests in the Middle East. He sees Israel burdened by a huge military budget and foreign debt arising from defense needs—a burden which is weighted against Israel by the U.S. and its allies' sales of arms to Israel's enemies.

After advising us that "the administration's attitude toward Israel's economic plight is altogether more heavily influenced by economists than by politicians or diplomats" and that "Secretary of State George Shultz is himself a professional economist of considerable repute," Mr. Eizenstat lists the "mandatory actions" Israel must take. Each of them deals with civilian consumption, the need to reduce the standard of living, reduce redundant government employment, and achieve better control of the currency. Yet none of these steps touches on Israel's huge defense needs, on the expenditures by Israel on behalf of the U.S. and NATO, or on the effect upon Israel's GNP of the 45-day annual military service required of most ablebodied Israelis up to the age of fifty-five. Nor do these proposals take into account U.S. defense needs in the area. Fortunately, events have overtaken the litany of woes: $2 billion has been slashed from Israel's available $13 billion civil budget; subsidies on necessities have been reduced; the Bank of Israel has gotten better control of the currency; and the inflation rate has been somewhat reduced.

Mr. Eizenstat tells us that Israel, from its earliest days, "has manifested built-in structural problems," which, in addition to wage indexation and inadequate monetary controls, include "huge budget demands for a new nation imbued with the ideal of gathering in exiles and reclaiming the desert." But Israel must reclaim the desert because it is a small country of only about 8,000 square miles (about the size of Massachusetts) of which only about 40 percent is arable. Israel lacks an adequate water supply, proven fossil fuels, water power, timber, or other sources of energy. The only "natural" resource is people, of whom there were only about 600,000 in 1948. David Ben-Gurion said that Israel's resource would be people, and pleaded for *aliyah*. Chaim Weizmann said that the future lay in science. Both were right.

During the first seven years of its existence, Israel received and absorbed over 750,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, exceeding by 250,000 the Arabs who fled Israel. Since then, these impoverished refugees from Arab lands, and their progeny, have grown to form a majority of the Jews of Israel.

Israel's sole national interest, vital in a literal sense, is survival, which subsumes security, the acceptance of all Jews who wish to enter Israel, and the defense of the human rights of Jews everywhere.

What "rational" people would go to such trouble and expense to import, house, and feed over 10,000 impoverished and unskilled Ethiopian Jews at a time like this? Were the new leader of the Soviet Union to expel the 400,000 Jews who have applied for exit visas on condition that they be flown to Israel and kept there, the world would expect Israel to welcome them. What fiscal expert can budget for this? Would any economic council advise it?

Obviously, Israel does not live by "economics" alone.

Even were all the "mandatory" actions taken to everyone's satisfaction, Mr. Eizenstat foresees some problems, one of which is the possibility that aid might be linked "to implicit political conditions." The U.S. Congress will soon consider arms-sales packages to Saudi Arabia and Jordan. But, according to Mr. Eizenstat, if the release of additional aid to Israel were timed to coincide with these deliberations, "This

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would make it harder for Israel and its friends in Washington to fight such a sale, *even though it might pose a real security threat to Israel"* (emphasis added). But such an act in our March of Folly in the Middle East would weaken Israel as a strategic ally and reduce its ability to safeguard American interests. Why then should Israel's friends not oppose such a threat to its security?

In November 1978, a group of over 117 retired U.S. admirals and generals (all men beyond political ambition) wrote to President Carter, saying: *"We urge you, Mr. President, to recognize that Israel's value as a strategic asset depends upon its ability to defend itself, and to reinforce Israel's capability so that we will not be forced to deploy our own forces in the Middle East"* (emphasis in original).

In early 1978, Prime Minister Begin said that Israel would accept a mutual-defense pact with the United States, including military facilities in Israel.

Nevertheless, the notion that Israel is a charity case persists and appears to underlie Mr. Eizenstat's article. None of his proposals deals directly with the need to strengthen U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East.

Mr. Eizenstat's hortatory injunctions, admonitions, warnings, and forebodings do not guide us to a resolution of the crisis. Even were all his "mandatory actions" taken to everyone's liking, they still would not point the way to reducing Israel's huge defense budget, overcoming the burden of its enormous foreign debt, or removing the other causes of its economic crisis. His concerns are with process and not with a program to remove the causes of the crisis or ameliorate their effects. He fails to address the need to rehabilitate the economy because it is in the American national interest to do so. This is what Mr. Spiegel does in his article in which he treats American relations with Israel as a whole. Mr. Spiegel's cogent analysis goes to the heart of the matter:

> The one element missing from the discussion [is] the crucial one—the dimension of strategy. Whether and how the United States helps Israel in this period of serious budgetary constraint should depend, in large measure, on the manner in which our interests will be affected by one course of action or another. To grasp the implications of this statement requires a look at the nature of Israel's economy and its relation to American strategic and defense needs.

When we accept Mr. Spiegel's basis premise that Israel is a strategic asset, the solution to strategic, military, economic, and diplomatic problems is cleared of many obstacles which Mr. Eizenstat envisions. If then we accept, as we must, that our ally, too, has national interests compatible with ours—survival, security, a homeland for Jews—then we see that our paths can join in safeguarding the national interests of both the U.S. and Israel.

"The question," says Mr. Spiegel, "is, therefore, not whether to assist Israel, but how." And to answer that question he sets out "four general approaches," which, he writes, "are not mutually exclusive": the U.S. can reduce arms sales to Arab countries; provide Israel with more aid; transfer grants to the Pentagon budget; and provide Israel with long-term contracts. Each is desirable and necessary, but in our present political climate, may encounter serious obstacles.

The Arabs can buy arms elsewhere. The increase in Arab arms burdens Israel's defense budget. To end the process, the Arabs must cease to increase their inventories or Israel's countervailing inventory must be increased without adding to Israel's burdens. That can be done, and the obstacles to Mr. Spiegel's approaches can be removed, by adopting two measures which have served the U.S. well in the past: lend-lease and the restructuring of an ally's war debts.

By making lend-lease a central part of our strategic agreement with Israel, we can provide long-term solutions to our strategic problems in the Middle East and to Israel's economic and defense problems as well.

A lend-lease program offers many possibilities:

Power in place: this has been the Pentagon's ambition for decades. With a long-term lease for a site in Israel, we can replace the Wheelus air-force base we surrendered to

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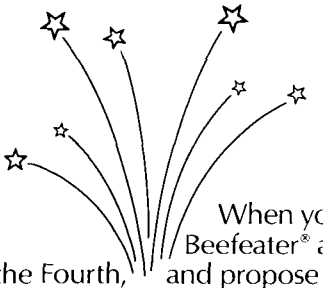

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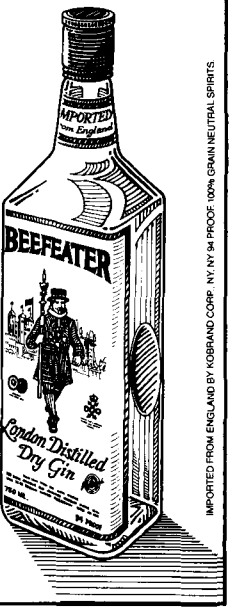

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Qaddafi and the powerful Etzion base in the Sinai which Israel destroyed pursuant to the Camp David accords. The U.S. has no site it can call its own anywhere in the Middle East. A site in Israel would provide the Pentagon with a network of roads and whole towns of skilled craftsmen to maintain and operate the base and to keep all in battle readiness. From that unsinkable aircraft carrier we can monitor the Persian Gulf and support the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Materiel in place: we can store a portion of our arms inventory in Israel from which we can supply our needs in Europe as well as the Middle East. That will serve two purposes—it is vital to U.S. interests to have planes, tanks, fuel, intelligence equipment, ammunition, and other materiel in places available for immediate use. The Rapid Deployment Force exercises last year proved once again that it takes longer, costs more, and is more difficult to transport materiel than men. The RDF is a failure.

Storing materiel in Israel will also provide Israel with an adequate inventory without burdening its defense budget or debt. The lend-lease of this supply will be paid for by American savings and by Israel's maintaining that supply in battle-ready condition. We station troops in Europe and Asia, but we shall need none in Israel except for a small force training in Israel.

The Pentagon will be in a position to play a more dominant role in lend-lease than the State Department and all of this can be incorporated into long-term contracts to obtain the benefits of Israeli research and development, modernization, and other developments. Some of this has already occurred, as witness the recent leasing to the U.S. Navy of Israeli-built jet fighters to be used in training.

Restructuring Israel's foreign debt, most of which was incurred to acquire arms, is essential to relieve Israel and the U.S. of that burden.

Mr. Spiegel has provided several examples of the use of a double standard in sharing defense costs with our allies. We have failed to compensate Israel for its defense expenditures on our behalf and on behalf of our allies. Nor have we ever compensated Israel for the harm done to it in lives and treasure by our arms embargo.

In restructuring the debt, we should conduct an inquiry into its extent and amount and reduce the debt not as a matter of grace but strictly as a *quid pro quo*. Such an inquiry by a joint American-Israeli commission could consider the following:

- The U.S. spends $129 billion of its $300-billion defense budget in Europe and about $47 billion in Asia. We keep about 300,000 troops in Europe and 100,000 in Asia. We spend $9.9 billion, on average, for the thirteen NATO nations and $7.8 billion, on average, for Asian nations; but only $2.6 billion, less than 1 percent of the Pentagon budget, is spent in grants to Israel. And we maintain no troops there.
- The U.S. spends 50 times as much in Europe and 18 times as much in Asia as it does in the Middle East.
- We have spent over $300 million in Oman and perhaps $1 billion to rebuild the Egyptian Ras Banas base on the Red Sea. But neither is under our control, and we may use them only if it serves Arab purposes.
- What would it cost the U.S. to build and maintain a base in the Middle East?

All of these approaches can help safeguard American national interests in the Middle East, and Israel's, too. While we cannot hope for peace in our time but only an extended form of cease-fire, these measures may provide some stability in the area. They are certainly more effective than relying upon an elusive, if not impossible, comprehensive peace settlement.

Israel chose to side with the United States and not with the Soviet Union, and to support American interests in the Middle East. As a disavowed or unacknowledged ally until recently, Israel has gained the enmity of the Soviet bloc as well as of the Arabs and members of the so-called Third World. And as a very small, junior partner, Israel has been subjected to the wide swings of and vagaries in American Middle East policy.

One of the fixed and most destabilizing elements in the Middle East is the notion that the United States can impose a settlement upon Israel which would satisfy Arab hopes and ambitions. When, therefore, the Reagan administration safeguarded the departure of PLO forces from Beirut and initiated the September 2, 1982 plan for a comprehensive settlement, that revived the hopes of Arab terrorists and gave rise to a new series of terrorist attacks on Israeli forces *leaving* Lebanon.

In what appears to the Arabs as the success of their pressure tactics, the U.S. is once again actively working for a comprehensive settlement by sending Richard Murphy, an Assistant Secretary of State, on journeys from capital to capital in the Middle East, proving again the triumph of hope over experience.

Fouad Ajami, director of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, views American diplomatic activity with some misgivings. It appears to be Washington's conventional wisdom that "the Arabs and Israel are ready for peace" and that "the missing ingredient is an American role, an American peace plan" (New York *Times*, op-ed piece, April 14, 1985). But in Ajami's view, a reentry by the United States into the Middle East peace process will upset the region's stability: "For a year now, the United States has stayed out of trouble in the Middle East, and the region has survived the consequences of its benign neglect. It's doubtful if the consequences of American activism would be as benign."

Surely the time has come when American military, political, and diplomatic strategy in the Middle East should be coordinated with Israel's, without fear of Arab frowns, and because doing so will serve both nations' mutual interests in the area.

M. H. BLINKEN
Palm Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Israel's economic crisis has been receiving increasing attention in the United States. In the April COMMENTARY, Stuart E. Eizenstat and Steven L. Spiegel discuss what role the United States should play in helping Israel to help itself. In particular, the two authors are quite concerned with what I call the moral dilemma of American "conditionality."

Let me try to summarize the problem as I see it:

Israel is an essential and invaluable strategic and political asset, an ally that provides America with a number of priceless services. Moreover, the two nations are tied to each other emotionally and ideologically.

In its first twenty-five years, Israel not only proved itself viable economically but achieved growth rates that were the envy of the de-

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veloping world, often surpassing those of Japan.

The reversal came in 1973, after which Israel's growth rate ground to a halt, its foreign debts skyrocketed, and its productivity stagnated. The trigger for this was the 1973-74 Yom Kippur War and its aftermath.

Sizable U.S. aid to Israel began after 1973. Much of this represented America's fulfilling its obligations under the trilateral Kissinger formula, whereby Israel, in a series of agreements, made enormous territorial concessions to Egypt and Syria in exchange for U.S. aid.

Israel's foreign debts (net of foreign assets) have now reached about $20 billion, almost a year's GNP, the bulk of which are debts of the Israeli government.

Continuing economic deterioration not only threatens social stability in Israel, but could lead to strategic dangers such as having to limit the size of the defense establishment. (For elaboration, see my article, "The European Threat to Israeli Security," *Wall Street Journal-Europe*, March 20, 1985.) This, at the same time that the arming of the Arab states at war with Israel continues at its astronomical pace with U.S. and European collaboration.

While military costs triggered the post-1973 economic crises, official Israeli economic policy compounded the problem and continues to inflict enormous economic damage on the country.

Particularly in light of the last point, the following moral dilemma has arisen. On the one hand, any attempt by the U.S. to "condition" aid upon changes in Israeli economic policy represents a symbolic violation of the sovereignty of an ally with its own democratically elected leadership. While Israeli economic policy is misguided, it is the job of the Israeli polity to change it and perhaps replace the policy-makers. Moreover, the exercise of pressure politics constitutes a dangerous precedent for future extortion over non-economic issues.

On the other hand, Israel's political leadership is singularly determined to continue driving the economy into insolvency and has resisted all calls for serious reform, including those by Israeli economists. Every delay in the immediate overhaul of economic policy leads to increasing damage and costs to Israeli society. If reform is to await the inevitable ideological bankruptcy of the current political elite, massive and perhaps irreparable damage might well occur.

So what is the answer? Let me propose a middle course. American military and civilian aid should continue, and perhaps increase, for all the reasons Steven L. Spiegel spells out, with no strings attached. However, all further extensions of U.S. loans to the Israeli government should be halted immediately. These loans only compound Israel's foreign debts. In recent years they have been financing the government's bloated consumption and not private-sector investment (and thus economic growth).

Any new U.S. loans should be conditioned on progress in some or all of the following areas:

1. Complete elimination of all government subsidies, including export subsidies.
2. Unification of Israeli-effective protection rates.
3. Elimination of all anti-competitive government regulation.
4. Denationalization of the Israeli capital market, and in particular elimination of "directed" and "earmarked" government credit.
5. Reform of labor legislation to allow increased labor mobility.
6. Selling off of nationalized industries.
7. Elimination of the Ministry of Industry and Trade.
8. Ending the endless funneling of public funds into insolvent enterprises.
9. Serious reduction in the size of the public-service labor force.

In effect I am calling for a U.S. policy that says "aid is aid and business is business." Unlike aid, lending and investment are business and demand businesslike behavior. I have emphasized a series of "supply-side" measures that enjoy near-consensus among economists and should appeal to the current U.S. administration. In addition, they should arouse less political resistance in Israel than pressure to cut, say, spending for defense or public services. These measures, moreover, would result in dramatic economic improvement.

In light of the recent U.S.-Israel trade agreement, the U.S. should feel as free to twist Israel's arm on trade matters—e.g., cutting export subsidies—as it does to pressure Japan. (These subsidies harm the Israeli economy.) Restrictions on further official credit would force Israel to put its house in order before its foreign debts make housecleaning altogether impossible.

STEVEN E. PLAUT
Technion-Israel Institute of Technology
Haifa, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Stuart E. Eizenstat's complex analysis of Israel's economic problems focuses on the actions the Israeli government must take to manipulate the economy and thus misses a major point. Israel's Gross National Product must grow so that its existing defense, welfare, and debt-service burdens are reduced to a tolerable fraction of its economy. Israel has human resources and a collective entrepreneurial flair that must be unique in the world, yet its economy stagnates because the government suppresses entrepreneurial drive with policies of onerous and confiscatory taxation combined with compulsive meddling in the free market.

The hopeful plans for the future Mr. Eizenstat mentions—including joint high-technology enterprises between American and Israeli businessmen—are also doomed, since an Israeli entrepreneur who would choose to remain in Israel where the government can confiscate his profits would be a noble and hence rare individual. Although this view may seem cynical, conversations with Israeli businessmen confirm it.

LAWRENCE I. BONCHEK
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Steven L. Spiegel's article, "Israel's Economic Crisis: What the U.S. Can Do," is well-intentioned, but its central argument—that defense expenditures are the principal cause of Israel's economic problems—is unfounded. The real culprit is increased government intervention in the economy, increased government consumption, and the waste that government policies induce.

To illustrate, compare two periods: (1) 1968-72 (between the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War), and (2) 1978-83. In Period 1, defense consumption constituted 22 percent of the GNP, while in Period 2 it was 24 percent. But nonmilitary government consumption, as a share of GNP, increased during Period 2 from 17 to 20 percent; and the government's excess demand in the economy increased from 8 percent of the GNP to 11 percent (it was only 2 percent of the GNP in 1960-65). Furthermore,

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employees in non-military government services constituted 23 percent of the labor force in Period 1, and grew to a staggering 29 percent of the labor force in Period 2. Given this trend, it seems that *every two employees in the private sector support one employee in the public sector!*

The increasing share of the government in the economy is only part of the problem. The other part is the incredible system of regulations and red-tape, which severely hampers entrepreneurship; and the wasteful subsidies to capital, which amount to telling business managers: "Even if you invest in unprofitable projects, we shall make it worth your while." Under such a system, it is no wonder that economic growth has been stifled, despite the influx of capital to Israel, and despite Israel's exceptionally skilled manpower.

I certainly do not intend to belittle Israel's defense burden, but many observers in Israel suggest that there is a lot of waste in that area as well, and that this burden could have been reduced had principles of economy and efficiency been applied. To illustrate, only this year will the Ministry of Defense start considering the real cost of reserve manpower in its calculations. Up until now the military was allocated reserves without regard to cost. Clearly, under such a system, a waste of manpower is inevitable.

To sum up: Israel has been forced to bear unusually heavy defense costs. But had the Israeli government been less expansive, had it curbed the growth of its share of the national pie and intervened less in the economy, the Israeli economy would not be facing its current crisis.

YAAKOV AMIHUD
Israel Center for Social
and Economic Progress
Tel Aviv University, Faculty
of Management
Tel Aviv, Israel

STUART E. EIZENSTAT writes:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these letters, which reflect the breadth and diversity of views on how best to help Israel overcome its serious economic problems.

Steven E. Plaut notes in his letter, as I did in my article, the dangers of any attempt by the United States to place explicit or implicit conditions on economic and military aid to Israel, since these could produce a serious loss of Israel's sovereignty. Economic conditions imposed by the United States might set a precedent for the imposition of political conditions at a later date. Indeed, this possibility is all the more reason for Israel to take urgent action to deal with its economic crisis. Israel must avoid being in the position of regularly requiring "emergency" economic aid above its traditional economic and military assistance, for such a request only invites the imposition of conditions.

Mr. Plaut suggests a "middle course" in which economic and military aid would continue without any conditions but "further extensions of U.S. loans to the Israeli government should be halted immediately" and any new U.S. loans should be "conditioned on progress" in a variety of economic areas. This suggestion has several problems. For one thing, all economic and military assistance has been converted in recent years from loans to grants, to lessen Israel's already enormous debt load. There are few if any government loans to which such conditions could be attached. Second, placing the type of extensive conditions on loans which Mr. Plaut suggests could lead to the same problems that attaching "strings" to civilian and military aid would produce. It would enable the United States to dictate the precise terms by which Israel should run its economy. There is no question that Israel virtually ensured its being put in such a position by its extraordinary request for $1.5 billion in emergency U.S. assistance. But certainly this should not be done on a routine basis. Third, the value of any direct U.S. loans to Israel is not likely to be in the range of magnitude sufficient to interest Israel in accepting them with the conditions Mr. Plaut proposes.

Nevertheless, the urgency shown in Mr. Plaut's letter reflects the need for Israel to use the emergency economic assistance it will be receiving in a productive manner. Nothing would be more destructive of good U.S.-Israel relations than for Israel to receive this extraordinary emergency assistance, at a time when Congress is cutting more than $50 billion from the U.S. budget, and then not to take the steps necessary to make that assistance effective. I am confident Prime Minister Peres will take those steps.

Lawrence I. Bonchek says that my hopes for increased investment by American businesses in Israel and American-Israel joint ventures are "doomed" by Israeli government policies which impose "onerous and confiscatory taxation combined with compulsive meddling in the free market." There is no question that Israel's economy suffers from serious structural rigidities, with excessive red tape and government subsidies. But Mr. Boncheck fails to take several factors into account. First, other countries with high levels of taxation, like Japan, have vibrant economies. While some reductions in taxation, over time, should accompany reductions in government spending, this must be done carefully so as not to encourage excessive demand and reignite inflation. Tax policies should be geared to encourage more capital investment and less consumption. Second, Mr. Boncheck should not forget the fact that Israel's economy for much of its life has been quite healthy and robust. During most of the 1950's and 1960's Israel's economy, with much the same structure it has today, had high growth rates, low unemployment, and tolerable levels of inflation. Third, I believe the present government is deeply committed to encouraging Israeli entrepreneurs and American investment, and is now initiating policies to create a more favorable economic climate.

Last, Mr. Boncheck should not ignore the recently signed free-trade agreement between the United States and Israel. This will help encourage additional investment in Israel by both Israeli and American businessmen to take advantage of unimpeded access to the American market. Thus, to Lawrence Bonchek I would say, Israel has had a healthy economy in the past and it can and will have a healthy economy again in the future.

In many respects, the letter of M.H. Blinken is more troubling than the others because it so fundamentally misinterprets my article and misses its basic point. Mr. Blinken seems to ascribe all of Israel's economic problems to the defense burdens it has assumed and likewise seems to believe that the solution to these problems will simply come from the recognition that Israel is a strategic ally of the United States. I do not differ from Steven L. Spiegel in my belief that Israel is in fact an important strategic asset of the United States. Indeed, during the time I was at the White

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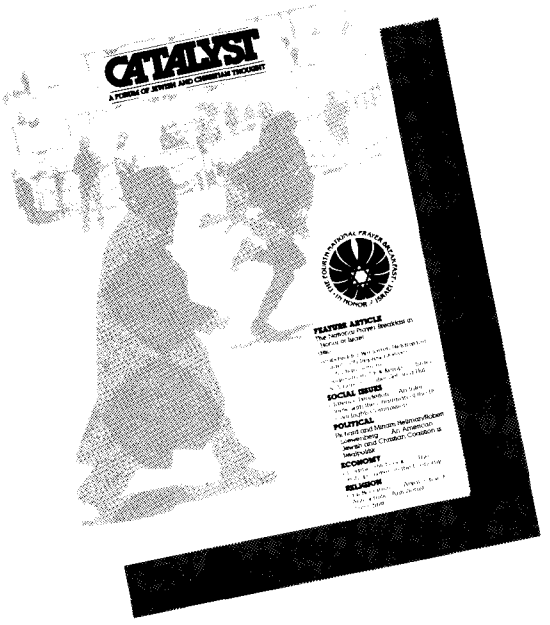

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House in the Carter administration I was helpful in securing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional economic and military assistance for Israel in the President's budget; I was one of the principal administration figures in the negotiation of the U.S.-Israel oil agreement of 1980, which guarantees that the United States will secure oil for Israel in the event Israel is cut off from its oil sources; and I strongly encouraged President Carter to provide additional assistance to Israel to compensate it for the cost of giving up the Sinai in compliance with its treaty with Egypt.

Moreover, although Mr. Blinken does not seem to recognize it, my article was unmistakably clear in pointing out that one of the key factors in Israel's current economic crisis is its extraordinarily high debt level, the highest per capita in the world, caused in significant part by the post-Yom Kippur War military loans made by the United States. Had these military loans been in the form of grants, Israel's debt service would be greatly reduced.

But Mr. Blinken should not retreat from hard reality. No country can avoid taking difficult measures when it is faced with difficult problems. There are no magic solutions without some sacrifice. The United States found this out in 1981-82 when it took a severe recession to drain the economy of its inflationary pressures—far lower than Israel's triple-digit inflation—and reduce historically high interest rates. Israel's recently released April inflation figures showing a 19.4 percent *monthly* increase in inflation are a reminder that all of the steps that must be taken have not yet been taken.

It is also important for Mr. Blinken and others to note that the measures the Reagan administration has suggested to the Israeli government are the very ones Israel's own leading economists, inside and outside the government, have been recommending. Recently, Yitzhak Tunik, the Comptroller of Israel, issued a blistering report urging tough measures. Indeed, the Reagan administration's suggestions are very much the same ones Prime Minister Peres has already initiated and has pledged to continue. I do not see how Mr. Blinken can quarrel with remedies which have been agreed upon between the governments of the United States and Israel and among leading economists in both countries.

As Mr. Blinken correctly points out, it is certain that because of Israel's historic mission to integrate immigrants and reclaim the desert and because of its heavy defense burdens Israel's economy will remain under pressure in the future even if the proposals outlined in my article are fully implemented. But these steps, together with a positive program to encourage greater business investment by Israelis, as well as joint ventures with and greater investment by Americans, can restore Israel's economy to the positive track it was on during much of its first twenty-five years.

What is most disquieting about Mr. Blinken's letter is its assumption that the United States, by encouraging Israel to follow the difficult course it must take to cure its economic ills, is failing to treat it as a strategic ally. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is utterly ridiculous for Mr. Blinken to claim that "the notion that Israel is a charity case . . . appears to underlie Mr. Eizenstat's article." There is no hint of such a thesis in my article; quite the contrary. Israel must cure its economic problems to *avoid* becoming a charity case; it must commit itself to firm action so that it can become less dependent on infusions of emergency assistance.

None of this has anything to do with the basic level of economic and military assistance the United States has been providing and should continue to provide. This is indeed an investment in America's security as well as Israel's. But Israel certainly does not want to be put into the position of requesting "emergency assistance" of the magnitude it is now seeking. It is this which invites the imposition of implicit conditions, which, as I noted above, would be detrimental both to the U.S.-Israeli relationship and to Israel's sovereign integrity as an independent nation.

It is because of Israel's continuing vulnerability in the Middle East that American Presidents, both Republican and Democratic, and bipartisan majorities of the Congress have made Israel the largest beneficiary of economic and military assistance from the United States of any country in the world—an extraordinary accomplishment considering Israel's small population.

There are many things that the United States can and should do to help Israel out of its economic crisis, some of which are discussed in Steven L. Spiegel's article and others of which I have suggested. But none will be successful unless they are joined with concerted action on the part of Israel itself to deal with the fundamental problems which have led to the extraordinary economic crisis—again, a crisis which is recent in origin and has no historical precedent. It is sophistry to suggest, as Mr. Blinken does, that simply accepting the basic premise that Israel is a strategic asset—a premise with which I have long agreed—will solve its economic problems. Israel's own officials recognize this.

STEVEN L. SPIEGEL writes:

Yaakov Amihud raises a point which, though useful, is narrow and seductively deceptive. There is no question that government intervention in the Israeli economy should be lessened and that the country suffers from an overabundance of regulations and red-tape. But it is not the case that resolving these problems would also solve the current economic crisis.

Mr. Amihud ignores the peculiarly pernicious effect of Israel's defense burden. While it may fluctuate a bit from year to year, its level continues to be high, and it is cumulative. Thus, in the 1970's an impressive increase in exports was swamped by the need to import the latest and most sophisticated weaponry, whose costs were continually rising. The constant requirement to borrow in order to meet defense needs caused the huge increase in the country's debt, with devastating economic and social consequences. The expensive peace settlement with Egypt exacerbated these problems.

A high rate of defense expenditures over time encourages government intervention and regulation even as it saddles the economy with distortions and dislocations. The statistics Mr. Amihud himself cites confirm my analysis that Israel is a victim of its huge defense burden.

Mr. Amihud might consider what Israel's economic life would have been like without its defense obligations. In preparing my article, I was deeply affected by the testimony of former Assistant Secretary of Defense Leonard Sullivan before a congressional subcommittee in 1982. Sullivan argued that if Japan, which spends less than 1 percent of GNP on defense, had been

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forced instead to spend what the U.S. has spent over the postwar period (6 percent), it would never have achieved its tremendous economic advances, and today its GNP would be comparable to Italy's. By contrast (and using Mr. Amihud's own calculations), Israel's defense burden from 1978 to 1983 was 24 times that of Japan and 4 times that of the U.S. We do not know what advances, reforms, and breakthroughs would have been possible if the energy and resources devoted to defense had been applied to other areas. Given Israel's "exceptionally skilled manpower" and the "influx of capital" (again to quote Mr. Amihud), we could certainly expect the country's economy to have been more vibrant.

In international politics as in domestic life, the rich are excused for their extravagance, their waste, and their idiosyncrasies while the poor are criticized for "unnecessary expenses" which supposedly prove they deserve their poverty. Mr. Amihud does not take into account the special conditions of Israel's history: it has absorbed Jews from around the world—quadrupling its population in the process. As we have seen in the recent case of the Ethiopian immigrants, the government is responsible for providing these new arrivals with such services as housing, education, and health care to facilitate their integration into society. And accumulated experience has deepened the tendency to rely on governmental solutions to social and economic problems.

Successful societies are able to reform and adapt while avoiding revolution or stagnation. Israel has not previously had to regenerate itself. But the country is still being tested, and is now collectively undergoing a mid-life crisis, not only in the economic arena but in the political and social arenas as well. The quality of its future will be determined by the ability of its people to create new institutions or to adapt and reform existing ones. Government intervention, consumption, and waste are only a part of the problem.

In this connection, I am impressed with Israel's readiness to expose itself to international competition in the form of a free-trade area with the United States. Israel has thereby initiated a program which will inevitably require reforms in its own procedures and business practices.

Steven E. Plaut, however, seems to think that the new trade agreement provides an opportunity for American arm-twisting of Israel. I find this part of his argument disturbing and contradictory. After cogently explaining why America should not pressure Israel, he then proceeds to recommend such pressure—in however modified a form. But pressure cannot be partial; once the line has been crossed, it is likely to acquire a momentum of its own.

I do not believe Israel deserves such a U.S. policy, or that American interests would be served by it. In any case, the program Mr. Plaut proposes would not work because, as of Fiscal Year 1985, the U.S. government has ended loans to Israel and replaced them with grants, and for the very reason Mr. Plaut cites—"loans only compound Israel's foreign debts." Since Mr. Plaut does not favor a cut-off of grants, his program is not viable.

I can understand Mr. Plaut's frustration that his recommendations for reform have not been adopted by the Israeli government. He may even be correct that Israel will suffer deeply if the policies which he and others like him have advocated continue to be ignored. But as he himself admits, this argument should be directed in the first instance to Israelis themselves, not to Americans.

One of the great blessings of a sovereign democratic state is its ability to determine its own future. There seems to me something demeaning in the spectacle of Israelis, unsuccessful in pressing their case in their own country, coming to Americans—Jews, public officials, businessmen—to ask that pressure be placed on their countrymen. Members of such disparate groups as Gush Emunim, Peace Now, and the Labor and Likud parties have appealed to Americans to determine the outcome of their internal debates, and now economists are doing the same. They are all equally misguided.

Those who seek our intervention forget that even Americans who are sympathetic to Israel are as divided about the future direction Israeli policies should take as are the Israelis themselves. Does Mr. Plaut really wish Israel to be saddled with *our* internal rivalries and debates? And if we were indeed to intervene in the Israeli economy, how can he be sure that the policies he favors would be the

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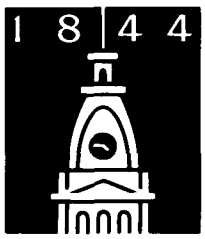

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ones adopted? He trusts the Reagan administration to impose supply-side solutions; what solutions would a liberal administration impose?

Messrs. Amihud and Plaut notwithstanding, my article was not addressed to the future organization of Israel's economy. Rather, I sought to assess Israel's current crisis in terms of its consequences for American interests in the Middle East. My argument was that Israel's importance to those interests requires that we view it as a partner, and that doing so involves looking into new areas of cooperation as a means of mutual benefit. This is the burden of M.H. Blinken's letter as well. Although I have no disagreement with the substance of Mr. Blinken's message, his use of the term "lend-lease" and his proposal that the U.S. lease a site in Israel suggest again the unfortunate tendency to see Israel as a ward—an admirable and even heroic ward, but a ward nonetheless. I think this is inaccurate and dangerous: inaccurate because Israel performs critical services in the intelligence and defense fields on behalf of the United States which we can ill afford to do without, and dangerous because it can lead eventually to increased resentment on both sides.

I agree with Mr. Blinken that the concept of the Rapid Deployment Force has proved disappointing, and that prepositioning supplies and materiel in Israel would go far toward overcoming its deficiencies. But if supplies are in place, men can be moved rapidly into the area; why then would we need a base, especially given Israel's proven abilities to protect secure areas?

As I wrote, Israel's procedural and technological innovations in the field of conventional defense offer major opportunities for cooperation. I remain hopeful that my article will stimulate further discussion in both the public and private sectors of the United States and Israel concerning the means to enhance strategic collaboration between the two countries.

The Holocaust

To the Editor of Commentary:

Theodore S. Hamerow ["The Hidden Holocaust," March] must be applauded for his excellent article exposing the almost total neglect by Holocaust historians of the widespread and enthusiastic collaboration with the Nazis by the governments and populations in Nazi-occupied Europe. In fact, that collaboration was the essential element in the logistics of round-ups and deportations. Paradoxically, historians of the Holocaust have also largely ignored the opposite aspect of the Holocaust, which is the rescue of Jews by non-Jews. These omissions of scholarship are nowhere better illustrated than in the case of the near-total destruction of the Croatian Jewish community of Yugoslavia by Croatian fascists (the Ustasha) on the one hand, and the rescue of several thousand Croatian Jews by the Italian army acting in concert with the Italian foreign ministry, on the other.

The Croatian Ustasha state came into being in April 1941, following the defeat of Yugoslavia by the Axis partners who proceeded to divide the country into occupation zones. Within days, the Ustasha began their terror campaign against the 40,000 Croatian Jews without any prodding or coaching by the Germans. The Croatians set up 13 "collection" camps and 9 death camps, including the infamous Jasenovac complex. By mid-1942, 25,000 Jews had been killed or were dying in the death camps.

The Ustasha brutality shocked even the Nazis, who decided to put an end to "that Balkan savagery" and deported some 5,000 Jews to Auschwitz where they all perished. Yet to this day there is no scholarly study in English of the Ustasha "Independent State of Croatia," or of the Holocaust in Yugoslavia which would, of course, have to include the near-total annihilation of Serbia's Jews. The same failure to investigate applies to the Italian rescue (except for Daniel Carpi's article on the subject in the 1977 Yad Vashem *Studies*).

I was among the 5,000 Croatian Jews who managed to escape to the Italian occupation zone on the Adriatic coast. The Italian Second Army protected us against the Ustasha administration and the Italian foreign office fought off the Germans for almost two years, refusing steadfastly to surrender us to the Nazis. In 1942, the Italian army interned some 1,600 of us in what must surely have been the most extraordinary concentration camp in history. We were free to organize our lives; we had a synagogue, a complete secondary school, Italian military hospital facilities, etc. I must point out that the Italians protected foreign Jews as much as was possible wherever the Italian army was the occupying power—in Southern France, Greece, Albania, and North Africa—which was an extraordinarily humanitarian act in view of the fact that those Jews inevitably hoped for a German, and therefore an Italian, defeat. The Italians saved our lives in 1941, when it was far from clear who would win the war.

Thus, the most extraordinary story of massive rescue during the Holocaust—besides the abundantly publicized Danish rescue—remains hidden. Whatever the audience, Jewish or Gentile, professional historians or just "ordinary" people, I invariably encounter total surprise and often utter bewilderment on the part of my listeners when I mention these facts. This, too, is a hidden Holocaust, but not for lack of linguistic abilities on the part of historians. The definitive study, *Jews Under Fascism*, by the renowned Italian scholar Renzo de Felice, remains untranslated. Surely, there are translators of Italian into English.

Could it be that there is a simpler explanation for all this neglect, namely, that historians feel that the destruction of the numerically preponderant Jewish communities of Eastern Europe makes the story of the destruction and partial rescue of the Mediterranean communities just a footnote?

Ivo Herzer

Vienna, Virginia

To the Editor of Commentary:

"The Hidden Holocaust" by Theodore S. Hamerow brings up an issue not much discussed—the complicity of the civilian population of Europe, particularly that of Eastern Europe, in the murder of Jews.

When the Wehrmacht attacked the USSR on June 22, 1941, first penetrating the buffer states, the German armies were accompanied by small mechanized killing units of the SS which were free to go about their special business. These were the *Einsatzgruppen* (special duty groups) which had been organized and trained in Saxony beginning in May 1941. There were four of these *Einsatzgruppen* operating along the Eastern front from the Baltic states in the north to the territories of the southern Ukraine, the Crimea, and the Caucasus. The total personnel of all four units

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taken together numbered 3,000, including cooks, messengers, and typists. Their purpose was to hunt down and kill Jews, and their methods were to enlist the support of the local populations: Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles. These units ended up being responsible for killing 1,400,000 Jews —and this before the death camps began fully to operate.

Brigadenführer Dr. Stahlecker, commander of *Einsatzgruppe A* (operating in the Baltic states) reported:

> Partisan groups formed in Lithuania and established immediate contact with the German troops taking over the city [Kovno]. Unreliable elements among the partisans were weeded out, and an auxiliary unit of 300 men was formed under the command of Klimaitis, a Lithuanian journalist. As the pacification program progressed, this partisan group extended its activities from Kovno to other parts of Lithuania. The group very meticulously fulfilled its tasks, especially in the preparation and carrying out of large-scale liquidation.

At the climax of the mass shootings of Jews there were eight Lithuanians to every German in Stahlecker's firing squads.

The *Einsatzgruppen* encouraged pogroms, wishing the population to take a major part of the responsibility for the killing operations. . . .

Elements of the Lithuanian population responded with considerable enthusiasm and, often, with anticipation. In the town of Kupishok—the birthplace of my parents —in northeastern Lithuania, Jews had lived since the 17th century with no record of a pogrom. And yet in the summer of 1941 there were those who marched the small children of the Jews of Kupishok to their graves at three o'clock one morning. Along the way they were accompanied by local musicians playing folk songs on their horns to drown out the cries and weeping of the children. The aged Dr. Frantskevitch was brought to the scene of the shootings to sign certificates attesting to the deaths of the children from illness.

The organizers of the killings in Kupishok were a high-school teacher and his mistress, also a teacher; local wealthy farmers; a foreman; two recent high-school graduates; and two town drunks. The only Lithuanian in Kupishok who tried to save a few Jewish students was a former priest named Ragalskis. After warnings and death threats, he fled the town.

STANLEY MAYERSOHN
Scottsdale, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodore S. Hamerow's article leads to a number of other questions. . . . How much wealth—diamonds, jewelry, houses, furs, cash, etc.—taken from Jews who were murdered or who fled enriched not only Germans, but some Poles, Rumanians, Slovaks, and other nationalities? Who became the owners of the Jewish homes, of the Jewish furniture? How many non-Jewish families are living better off these spoils even today?

A second point Mr. Hamerow discusses is the failure of the Jews to fight back during the Holocaust, blaming their inaction in part on the feeling of being surrounded in an alien environment. But one other factor must be taken into account—the terrible physical debilitation experienced by the Jews. . . . In the face of hunger and starvation, how many people anywhere can gather the force and the strength to rebel? Look at the apathetic faces of starving people in Africa today.

One more question also deserves to be asked: when any of us speaks of the six million dead as the totality of the Holocaust, do we not do a disservice to all the unborn, the people who might have lived, who might have brought music and art and knowledge and science and business strength and creativity, and even the usual human faults, to this world? . . . Not only should we speak of the six million dead, but also . . . of the generations who will never live and contribute to the well-being of this earth.

JERRY STEINMAN
West Nyack, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I compliment Theodore S. Hamerow for his "The Hidden Holocaust."

I wonder if it is now time to . . . put a halt to the mention of

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the Holocaust as if it were solely a Jewish tragedy.

Collective grief pertained not only to six million Jews, but to almost three million Catholics and perhaps five million Protestants, as well as half-a-million Gypsies. Several generations of children have already grown up believing that Jews were the only people slaughtered. The Holocaust also included Christians slaughtering Christians. . . .

HAROLD HEIFETZ
North Hollywood, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodore S. Hamerow addresses an important aspect of 20th-century genocide. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn analyzed a similarly haunting question: why did so few victims resist? In this century of the Holocaust, Stalin's Gulag, and Kampuchean mass murder, Solzhenitsyn and Hamerow's question remains starkly unanswered.

Solzhenitsyn asked in *The Gulag Archipelago*: "Why did we in the camps, where we *did* realize what was going on, suffer hunger, bend our backs, put up with it all, instead of fighting back?" He answered incompletely: "The reason we put up with it all in the camps is that there was no public opinion *outside*." The "camps," of course, were metaphorically an entire nation unable physically and unwilling spiritually to fight against Stalin's internal war.

Mr. Hamerow concludes that the Jews failed to resist Hitler's genocide because of their "rootlessness and alienation in European society." But this response is inadequate for this bloody century. Twentieth-century genocide cuts a swath across racial and ethnic boundaries. Victims other than the Jews have also failed to resist genocide.

The answer to the question, instead, must lie in a deeper and more open acknowledgment of our human capacity for evil, and a less benign optimism about goodness and rationality in the social and political ordering of the modern state. The Jews, the Russians, and the Cambodians failed to resist adequately because they underestimated man's capacity for evil. . . .

TIMOTHY M. TYMKOVICH
Broomfield, Colorado

THEODORE S. HAMEROW writes:

I am gratified that a number of readers, some speaking from personal experience or that of close relatives, agree with my contention that not enough has been written about the participation of non-Germans in the Holocaust. This is not an entirely neglected subject, to be sure. Yad Vashem *Studies* as well as other works have done something to fill the gap. But it is also clear that a great deal remains to be done with this aspect of the extermination of European Jewry. Such research, moreover, should deal not only with the persecution of Jews, but also with efforts, by individuals or groups, to assist them. The book by Renzo de Felice on the attitude of the Italians, for example, certainly deserves more attention than it has received in this country. Indeed, I touched in my article on the Italian refusal to participate in the Holocaust.

Finally, although it is admittedly important to recognize that more Christians than Jews perished in the atrocities of World War II, only Jews and Gypsies were condemned to destruction not for what they did but for what they were. Others were killed because they had in some way broken the rules of the occupation authorities, by acts of resistance, by trading on the black market, by violating the curfew, or simply by not being or appearing servile enough. In short, their actions or attitudes seemed inimical to the interests of the Third Reich. But Jews and Gypsies were doomed because of their biological or genetic origin, not because of anything they had done or might do. Thus they differed fundamentally from the Russians in Stalin's Gulag or the Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge. They were victims of genocide in the true sense of the word. That is why the proportionate losses they suffered during the Holocaust far exceed those of any other ethnic or national group. This distinction between them and the others should not be forgotten.

Virginia Woolf

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I regard Gertrude Himmelfarb's "From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals" [February] as one of the most significant essays in the history of ideas and mores that I have read in many years. It has enormous power, integrity, and importance. I suspect that it took not only extraordinary learning and some courage to write, but some courage to publish as well. Miss Himmelfarb, to whose magnificent book on Darwin I also feel personally indebted, has followed brilliantly and in proper scholarly fashion on the critique of Bloomsbury so notably pioneered by Malcolm Muggeridge. If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, our sense of culture and ethics cannot fail to be saner for these efforts.

M.D. AESCHLIMAN
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "From Clapham to Bloomsbury: A Genealogy of Morals," Gertrude Himmelfarb again displays her erudition and her mastery of the social and literary milieu of the Victorian age. . . .

It was therefore with a sudden shock that I came across her evaluation of Virginia Woolf as a "minor novelist" more remembered now for her diaries and letters than for her novels. Surely the creator of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, not to mention *The Waves*, *The Years*, and *Jacob's Room*, cannot be relegated by even the strictest critical standard to the second rank of English literature.

David Daiches, the noted British literary critic, once said: "Virginia Woolf can afford to rest her claims on her novels which show her to be one of the half-dozen novelists of the present century whom the world will not easily let die." . . .

So secure does Virginia Woolf's place seem among major novelists that she is invariably bracketed with Joyce and Kafka in almost all literature courses. I think Miss Himmelfarb . . . should reconsider.

JACOB LICHSTEIN
Los Angeles, California

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB writes:

I'm not sure how one adjudicates the question of whether Virginia Woolf was a "minor" or "major" novelist. But since Jacob Lichstein cites David Daiches, whose judgment I respect, I am prepared to accept his authority. In the sentence immediately following that quoted by Mr. Lichstein, Daiches continues: "There can be little question that she was the greatest woman novelist of her time, though she herself would have objected to the separation of her sex implied in such a judgment." "The greatest woman novelist of her time"—this seems to me to be a highly qualified commendation. It doesn't even make of Virginia Woolf a major

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woman novelist of all time, of the stature of Jane Austen or George Eliot, let alone a major novelist of the order of Joyce or Kafka.

The issue is posed even more explicitly in the opening sentences of the chapter, in which Daiches puts the question: "What, then, was Virginia Woolf's contribution to English literature?" His answer is notably modest: "It was a very real, if in some sense a limited, one." He then proceeds to describe the "unstable equilibrium between lyrical and narrative art" which characterizes her novels, and concludes that "only in the two middle novels [*Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*] is the precarious balance maintained throughout"; all the others are seriously flawed in one respect or another.

I am prepared to reconsider my judgment of Virginia Woolf if Mr. Lichstein will reconsider his. Can we agree that she was a talented but "limited" novelist?

Solzhenitsyn, Cont'd.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's attempt to deal comprehensively with the entire phenomenon of Solzhenitsyn ["The Terrible Question of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," February] is as ambitious as it is thought-provoking. But it is also very unfair in dismissing all the major works of the writer except *The Gulag Archipelago* and *The Oak and the Calf*.

Mr. Podhoretz fails to recognize that by reading Solzhenitsyn in English translations only, he has in effect read texts produced by other persons, individuals who may or may not have transmitted the original in a reliable manner. A comparison with Tolstoy or Dostoevsky (two names Mr. Podhoretz repeatedly cites) is appropriate here, for the 19th-century writers became familiar to the Anglo-American world in the translations of Constance Garnett, a Victorian lady with great literary flair who set high standards of both accuracy and readability. Solzhenitsyn, in contrast, has until recently been very poorly served by his English-language translators.

There are special reasons for this, with the major one being the publicity that surrounded his name in the 1960's and '70's. In order to cash in on the latest sensation, publishers pressured translators to produce as quickly as possible, at an inevitable cost to quality. Good translators, it seems, simply work slowly, and one must assume that they were bypassed by publishers for this very reason. As I have tried to show elsewhere ("Solzhenitsyn in English: An Evaluation," in Kathryn Feuer, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 1976), the net result has been that virtually every translation of Solzhenitsyn published before the mid-70's is seriously deficient, at times to the point of re-

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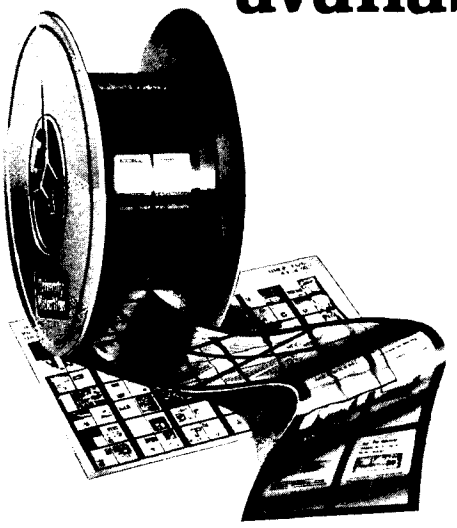

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sembling a parody of the original. No reasonable or even meaningful evaluation of the author is possible on the basis of these texts alone.

Things have improved dramatically since Harry Willetts has begun to translate for Solzhenitsyn, and it is not accidental that Mr. Podhoretz has such high regard for *The Oak and the Calf*, a text in which the author's stylistic virtuosity has at last received a worthy English rendition.

A different set of variables is involved in *The Gulag Archipelago*, the other work admired by Mr. Podhoretz. Although the translation of the influential first volume exhibits some very serious flaws, these defects are to a degree compensated by the vividness of the account and the intensity of tone. The texture is so rich and the subject is so appalling that partial losses due to translation errors tend to be obscured.

But Solzhenitsyn also writes in a different key. His earlier works, in particular, are tightly drawn narratives that depend heavily on understatement and irony. Mistakes or missed notes in this context can completely distort the aesthetic impact of a work.

Literary judgments of Solzhenitsyn based on translations alone cannot be justified.

ALEXIS KLIMOFF
Department of Russian
Vassar College
Poughkeepsie, New York

Paul Celan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was fascinated and deeply touched by John Felstiner's account of the haunted and haunting life and writings of Paul Celan ["Paul Celan: The Strain of Jewishness," April]. Even more upsetting to me then was a vexing mistake that Mr. Felstiner makes (I have to call it a mistake since it is repeated twice in as many paragraphs) in alleging that "it was generally believed" that Osip Mandelstam died "in Siberian exile in 1938." Indeed, nobody knows exactly when, where, and how the great Russian poet died precisely because his death occurred *not* in exile (where it could have been recorded by witnesses), but in a Russian forced-labor camp (where witnesses did not survive for long). The distinction might seem trivial to a modern-day commentator, but not to Celan who knew only too well that it meant the difference between life and death. Thus Mandelstam's fate was indeed linked to that of Celan's parents.

It is also interesting to note that Mandelstam's suicide attempt mentioned in the article followed his first incarceration by the secret police, during which he had experienced a foretaste . . . of his death at the hands of those who spoke his beloved Russian language.

Better than anyone else Paul Celan could feel to what extent Mandelstam's despair after that first encounter with fate was tied to the realization that:

> Whichever word you speak—
> you owe to
> destruction.

Thus the "piercing affinity" between two "dead almonds" is not at all surprising.

LENA MANDEL
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

John Felstiner's article on Paul Celan draws an informed sketch of the poet's life and Jewishness but seems to give short shrift to Celan's profound philosophical grasp of poetry. While translating Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Philosophical Apprenticeships* (MIT Press, 1985), I had the task of putting one of Celan's poems into English, but this was impossible without first understanding the poem. I came to appreciate how much emphasis Celan placed on the essential dialogue that could be heard in all real poetry, and so when Mr. Felstiner quoted Celan's Bremen Prize speech, a talk I was unaware of, I clearly heard the voice of Heidegger. This is not to say that Heidegger told Celan what poetry was about. (I am certain Celan could have told Heidegger just as well.) It is rather that both understood that poetic language is essentially dialectical.

Heidegger had been a Nazi in 1933 and 1934 and then had settled for an ambivalent relationship to his own past which lasted until his death in the 1970's. One would therefore think that Celan might have kept his distance from the man if not from his thinking, but the thinking drew Celan to the man. So he finally visited the philosopher at his cottage in the Black Forest, sometime at the end of the 1950's. Celan and Heidegger walked and talked, but there were no witnesses to that conversation. Celan left shortly thereafter, but he later recorded his experience in a poem. . . .

ROBERT R. SULLIVAN
John Jay College
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his admirable article on Paul Celan, John Felstiner refers to a 1939 essay by Erich Kahler, "*Ursprung und Wandlung des Judenhasses*," which he translates as "Origin and Metamorphosis of Jew-Hatred." Readers might be interested to know that this essay was originally published in English under a different title, "Forms and Features of Anti-Semitism" (*Social Research*, November 1939). It was not published in German until 1952 (in *Verantwortung des Geistes*, Fischer Verlag). As Mr. Felstiner notes, when Celan sent Kahler his book of poems, *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, he inscribed it with a quotation taken from this essay.

The title of Erich Kahler's 1964 essay, which Mr. Felstiner says Celan must have read, is "*Deutsche und Juden*." This essay was printed in the *Festschrift* for Margarete Susman's ninetieth birthday to which Celan contributed two poems (Erato Press, Darmstadt, 1964). It later appeared in English as "The Jews and the Germans" (in *Jews Among the Nations*, Frederick Ungar, 1967).

ALICE L. KAHLER
Princeton, New Jersey

JOHN FELSTINER writes:

Lena Mandel is right—I should not have said that Mandelstam died in "exile," as such. However, the best evidence indicates that he did not die in a "forced-labor camp" either, but in a transit camp near Vladivostok, where he may have been destined for Kolyma. His widow, Nadezhda Mandelstam, along with his posthumous editor, Gleb Struve, and his biographer, Clarence Brown, seem virtually certain that he did die in 1938.

Robert R. Sullivan rightly hears the voice of Heidegger in Celan's 1958 Bremen speech, but Martin Buber's idea of dialogue can be heard there equally well, and even more strongly in Celan's great "Meridian" speech of 1960. Celan visted Heidegger not "at the end of the 1950's," but in July 1967.

I am grateful to Alice L. Kahler for specifying the titles of Erich Kahler's essays.

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The Military

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of *The 25-Year War* by Bruce Palmer, Jr. [Books in Review, March], Alvin H. Bernstein accuses "too many of our military officers" of "knee-jerk can't-do-ism." But we maintain large forward deployments in Western Europe, the Pacific littoral, and at sea. We daily train the young men and women who serve in our armed forces, and we maintain a vast inventory of weapons, ammunition, aircraft, and vessels.

Under our form of government, "the willingness to act" does not describe a choice made by the Department of Defense or the military services. The citizenry, collectively, through its elected representatives in Congress, raises an army and a navy. A War Powers Act was passed in 1974, limiting the powers of the executive regarding the employment of forces.

Mr. Bernstein sounds to me like one of the "civilian hawks" who inhabit the vast official and unofficial cottage industry which offers policy advice. Hell hath no fury like a noncombatant.

[Lt. Col.] ROBERT P. FAIRCHILD
Fort Monroe, Virginia

ALVIN H. BERNSTEIN writes:

Robert P. Fairchild has missed the point of my review. He seems to want to say that the Executive/Congress/the People/the War Powers Act is responsible for U.S. military inaction, not the military itself. In fact, the executive branch's constitutional control over the military does not solve the problem of the latter's inability to produce imaginative options for its government at times of crisis.

The Purges

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of *The Tsar's Lieutenant*, by Thomas G. Buston [Books in Review, April], Henrik Bering-Jensen describes Stalin's purges as being the "response to the assassination of Leningrad boss Sergei Kirov" in 1934. This is seriously misleading, suggesting as it does that Stalin's repression was motivated by the murder of an ally by a terroristic opposition. In fact, Kirov was killed on the orders of Stalin, who saw Kirov and the Leningrad party as the center of an anti-Stalinist Old Bolshevik opposition in the party and Politburo. The assassin, Leonid Nikolayev, acted under the orders of Vanya Zaporozhets, whom Stalin had installed shortly before as Deputy Head of the Leningrad NKVD in place of a Kirov loyalist.

Alexander Orlov, a senior NKVD officer, wrote after his defection:

> Stalin decided to arrange for the assassination of Kirov and to lay that crime at the door of the former leaders of the opposition, and thus with one blow do away with Lenin's former comrades. . . . He then would be justified in demanding blood for blood.

Kirov's murder was immediately followed by mass arrests among Leningrad party members.

It is also wrong to suggest that the purges began only in 1934. After the 15th Party Congress in 1927, more than 3,000 party members accused of "deviations" were expelled, many deported or imprisoned; Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev were all removed from office and sent to Siberia. That Congress was the one which, in the first Five-Year Plan, provided for the purge of the kulaks which led to millions of deaths while Kirov still ruled in Leningrad.

ARTHUR LYONS
Richmond, British Columbia

HENRIK BERING-JENSEN writes:

I am familiar with Alexander Orlov's book, with Khrushchev's hints, and with the literature of the Kirov assassination. But one would not guess from Arthur Lyons's letter that the question of Stalin's involvement in the Kirov murder remains a matter of controversy among historians of the Soviet Union. While writers like Robert Conquest and Roy Medvedev have advanced theories along the lines sketched by Mr. Lyons, others, chief among them Adam B. Ulam in his magisterial biography *Stalin: The Man and His Era*, dismiss such claims as unsubstantiated and based on later reconstructions. What is more, the method itself defies common sense: as Ulam argues, the last thing Stalin would have wanted to create was the precedent of a successful assassination attempt against a high Soviet leader, thereby encouraging people to take pot shots at their masters. If Kirov, why not Stalin? Ulam cites several examples of precisely this kind of logic, and Stalin, the former professional revolutionary, would certainly have been the first to recognize the risks of contagion.

As Ulam further notes, the fact that Nikolayev's deposition was never even referred to during the subsequent trials would tend to suggest that Kirov's murder was the act of a single individual, acting on his own. But in Stalin's Russia such an explanation would of course never do; and indeed, it did not take Stalin long to seize on the murder as a useful pretext for getting at his enemies.

Concerning Mr. Lyons's second complaint: he and I surely have no disagreement as to the extent of Stalin's villainy. I was simply using the term "purge" in the sense which has become universal in discussing Soviet history, while he seems to extend it to cover earlier events, everything from exiles and party exclusions to the effects of the first Five-Year Plan. Other than in Mr. Lyons's letter, I have been unable to find a single use of the word "purge" to describe the liquidation of the kulaks.

Samuel Chotzinoff

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I want to thank Samuel Lipman for his extensive remarks about my father, Samuel Chotzinoff ["Out of the Ghetto," March]. I found them perceptive and gratifying, and the conclusions he drew fascinating.

Readers might be interested to know that there is a third volume of my father's autobiography, in manuscript form, at the Mugar Library of Boston University, with the rest of his papers. I hope to be able to prepare it for publication in the not-too-distant future.

They might also be interested to learn that Arturo Toscanini sincerely believed he had Jewish blood. His reasoning was based on his sympathy with the Jews and on the fact that the leading Jewish family in Italy, from which he thought he was descended, was named Toscana.

All three men discussed by Mr. Lipman—my father, Jan Peerce, and Aaron Copland—were honored by being grouped together.

ANNE CHOTZINOFF GROSSMAN
West Gilgo Beach, New York

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Nicaraguan Harvest

Mark Falcoff

EXACTLY six years ago Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza fled his country before the victorious onslaught of a popular revolution. This was no ordinary episode in the history of Central America, a region where governments have often disappeared abruptly and under violent circumstances. Rather, it marked the end of more than thirty years of political domination by a single family, in which local forces of revolutionary change were aided and abetted by other governments in the region and including, at the very end, the United States. Though elements of the revolutionary leadership were troubling to the State Department and some members of Congress, the new regime in Nicaragua began its life with a generous legacy of optimism, hope, and good will, both at home and abroad. To some degree, this was not to be wondered at: several political generations of Nicaraguans had convinced themselves that *anything* would be better than Somoza, and sympathetic foreigners could only regard the dynasty of uniformed thugs which had governed that country since 1934 as, at best, a grotesque anachronism.

Moreover, Nicaragua was seen in July 1979 as a laboratory where all kinds of lessons learned from other places could be successfully applied. Almost immediately after the fall of Somoza, the tiny nation was almost literally overrun with foreign well-wishers bearing unsolicited advice—Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Swedish Social Democrats; Congressmen and AID officials from Washington; representatives of the governments of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama; and a remarkable assortment of revolutionary tourists—including, but not limited to, West German Trotskyists, Maryknoll nuns, Spanish Jesuits, Italian Marxists, and North Americans of all ages, classes, and conditions. Each of these groups expected the new regime in Nicaragua to validate its own peculiar notions of social and political change, though in the euphoria of those first days no one thought to ask whether one set of agendas was compatible with another. Nor did anyone apart from the authors of the 1980 Republican platform in the United States (and, ironically, some members of the new government in Managua) seriously consider the possibility that Nicaragua might become, like Cuba, an ally and client state of the Soviet Union. Rather, it was assumed on all sides that because the past had been so bad, the future *had* to be better.

The "future" is now here, and by the reckoning of all but the most inflexible apologists for the Nicaraguan regime, it is perceptibly and measurably worse. Nicaragua is not a wealthy country, but it has always been reasonably self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs, and also capable of producing or importing most basic consumer items. Indeed, over the past thirty-odd years, the living standards of the Nicaraguan people (like those in other Central American countries) had steadily risen, and the overall rates of economic growth had been, historically, quite impressive compared with most regions of the Third World. Since 1979, however, the indicators of Nicaragua's economic performance have pointed unswervingly downward. Taking 1978 as a base year, in 1982 agriculture, the country's principal source of foreign exchange, had declined 17 percent; industry had declined 18 percent; and commerce 27 percent. The only sector, in fact, during that four-year period which showed significant growth was the government, which had tripled in size since the current regime took power.

These stark figures represent a steady drop in living standards for the ordinary Nicaraguan. Private consumption fell in real terms by 12 percent in 1983 (the latest figures available), and official sources concede a 20-percent rate of unemployment. Salary levels have been frozen since 1981, and the annual rate of inflation has run in excess of 25 percent (according to Nicaraguan government figures). In spite of government subsidies for basic foodstuffs, for the first time in the nation's history there are serious shortages of staple items.

It is true, as spokesmen for the regime often point out, that the Nicaraguan revolution occurred a mere seven years after a devastating

MARK FALCOFF, whose articles in COMMENTARY include "How to Understand Central America" (September 1984) and "Is Peronism Finished?" (February 1984), is resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is *Small Countries, Large Issues*.

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earthquake which leveled Managua, the capital, and visited untold millions' worth of destruction upon housing stocks, physical plant, and infrastructure. It is also true that, like other Central American countries, Nicaragua is suffering from a depression in the prices of its primary exports, and from increases in interest rates and in the cost of imported oil. However, unlike its neighbors, it has been the recipient of almost unlimited foreign assistance. Concretely, since 1979 the country has received some $3 *billion* in new foreign loans and $250 million in outright donations (including $118 million from the U.S. authorized during the Carter administration). At the same time, like other Central American countries, Nicaragua has been able to purchase oil from Mexico and Venezuela under preferential terms, and was permitted to "roll over" the old (Somoza-contracted) foreign debt with American banks—some $582 million—under exceptionally favorable circumstances. In addition, between July 1979 and November 1981, Nicaragua received an average of $12 million in new lines of credit *per month* from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

To put matters in some perspective, during the past six years democratic Costa Rica, Nicaragua's immediate neighbor to the south, has received a mere $250 million in international assistance from the United States and Western Europe. Thus, if Nicaragua has economic problems, they cannot be due to a lack of comprehension or even solidarity on the part of the outside world.

NICARAGUA's problems are not, however, primarily economic but political. They arise from the disarmingly simple fact that control of what was a political revolution against Somoza has been effectively seized by a cabal of Marxist-Leninists—the Sandinista Front—who believe themselves in exclusive possession of historical truth and authorized to impose it upon a largely unwilling populace. In some ways what has happened in Nicaragua is not much different from what occurred in Cuba some twenty years earlier. In both cases, a hated dictator was overthrown by an extremely broad coalition of forces, including the business community, students, labor, the traditional political class, even the U.S. embassy. But the coalition's numerical preponderance was not sufficient in the immediate post-revolutionary period to counterbalance another group—heavily armed, better organized, more ruthless, and committed to a single unambiguous goal.

In Nicaragua, however, there were two crucial differences. The precedent of Cuba having been clearly established, no one could plead ignorance of the process whereby a democratic revolution in the Caribbean could be derailed into a totalitarian police state. Hence, the Sandinista Front had to take special care to reassure its democratic allies in the struggle against Somoza, as well as the United States and also other Latin American governments. This also meant that the actual *rate* at which the regime moved from control of the "commanding heights" to the institutions of daily life was bound to be much slower.

But more remarkable still was the fact that precisely because of the Cuban experience, Nicaragua's well-wishers at home and abroad were desperately anxious to accept the Sandinistas' stated commitments to pluralism, a mixed economy, and a nonaligned foreign policy. This was so because they shared the view that the tragic course of the Cuban revolution had been determined by the United States, whose alleged insensitivity to Castro's needs presumably "drove" or "forced" him into the arms of the Soviet Union. By the time it had become clear that a policy of conciliation and even appeasement was having no impact whatsoever on the conduct of the Nicaraguan government, these well-wishers were rescued by the advent of a conservative Republican administration in Washington. This allowed them to avert their gaze from the unbecoming spectacle of the Sandinistas asphyxiating Nicaragua's infant democracy in, as it were, the cradle, and to concentrate on the allegedly intemperate rhetoric of the White House, and later the iniquities, real or imagined, of the rebel force which arose to challenge the new dictatorship.

In retrospect it seems remarkable that so many otherwise well-informed people could believe that the Sandinistas were—or could come to be—a broadly representative political force responsive even in the most general way to the wishes of the Nicaraguan people. Their world view, their ideological commitments, even their strategies for achieving power were a matter of abundant historical record long before 1979. This much is clear from an important new monograph by David Nolan* which examines in considerable detail what its author calls the "internal logic" of Sandinista ideology.

Founded in 1961, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) took its name from a guerrilla leader who had fought the American Marines in the 1920's and was subsequently murdered by the first Somoza. General Sandino was not, however, a Marxist, so that the link between his reflexively nationalist movement and the FSLN is purely metaphoric and folkloric. For as Nolan shows, the Sandinistas have always been Marxist-Leninist, and beyond that, conspicuously loyal to the Soviet position in world affairs. At no time have they seriously contemplated an "independent" form of Marxism such as we are repeatedly told they might assume were the United States to alter its own policies toward them. (They have even gone so far as to continue diplomatic relations with Taiwan rather than recognize the anti-

* *FSLN: The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution*, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Miami, 203 pp., $14.95.

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Soviet government in Beijing, even though Taipei had strongly supported Somoza and had continued to provision him with weaponry to the very end of his rule.)

Moreover, although the leadership of the FSLN has split periodically, their differences have been purely methodological, pertaining only to the question of how to achieve power, not what to do with it once it has been attained. At times this has even meant temporarily shelving Marxist-Leninist rhetoric in order to reassure potential allies and, in the final phase of the struggle against Somoza, to persuade other countries to assist them with arms, base areas, and international recognition. Once in control of the army and police, the Sandinistas could afford to be more candid. To this effect, Nolan quotes Henry Ruiz, one of the nine members of the ruling National Directorate, who by June 1982 thought events sufficiently advanced to admit openly that

> . . . the revolution's honeymoon is coming to an end. By this I mean the romantic idea among those who believed that the Sandinista peoples' revolution was an idyllic revolution in which the interests of a group of traitors and the interests of the real working people could be fused; a shortsighted point of view, from which our revolutionary directorate never suffered.

If this was so, it was only because the National Directorate, almost unique among observers of or other participants in the Nicaraguan revolution, had no desire to deceive itself. In that sense, the footnotes in Nolan's book are perhaps more dramatic than the text. For they demonstrate that Sandinista notions of power and its purpose have long been readily available—not in the secret files of Somoza's police or the computers of the Central Intelligence Agency, but to literate Nicaraguans in dozens of books, pamphlets, and periodicals, and to American policy-makers in the unclassified translations regularly circulated by *Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS)* and the Latin American series of *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).*

At this point the Sandinistas have clearly won control of the guns, the ministries, the media, and the largest portion of the foreign liberal public. They have demobilized most of the other political parties and forces active in the struggle against Somoza, and driven most of their leaders into exile. The Sandinistas' problem, however, remains how to extend their grip upon the institutions of civil society—the private sector, the peasantry, the labor movement, the Indian minorities on the Atlantic coast, and above all the Roman Catholic Church. As long as these groups exist as entities separate and apart from the Nicaraguan state, they will continue to resist Sandinista rule. The cost of this struggle in economic and human terms has already been very high, though if the resistance is defeated, it will be higher still.

The best account of how the Sandinistas grew from a small group of Cuban-trained guerrillas to their present eminence is that of Shirley Christian, formerly Central American correspondent of the Miami *Herald*, now with the New York *Times*.* While her book in many ways adds immeasurably to our knowledge of Nicaragua and the Sandinistas, her narrative of events between 1979 and 1981 tells us little that we could not have anticipated from a reading of Claire Sterling's book on the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia.† That is, the Sandinistas utilized the classic techniques of political domination first developed by Lenin in 1918-23—the organization of "broad fronts" under whose ostensible banner a vanguard seizes power; then the consolidation of that power through control of the organs of state security; the elimination, one by one, of quondam allies ("salami tactics"); and the creation of parallel organs (trade unions, peasant organizations, legislative bodies) to replace those which the vanguard cannot dominate. To which must be added a new Nicaraguan contribution to the repertoire—a plebiscite cleverly disguised as a competitive election.

One of the virtues of Shirley Christian's book is that many chapters are subdivided chronologically. This allows us to see how little the growth of a totalitarian state in Nicaragua could have been a response to pressure from the United States government or the counterrevolutionary force which (until recently) it supported. Specifically, by the end of 1979, which is to say long before the Republican party had nominated Ronald Reagan and at a time when the Carter administration was actively courting the new Nicaraguan regime with money, technical assistance, and huge quantities of food and medicine, the Sandinistas had already imposed press censorship; established neighborhood surveillance committees to monitor the lives of ordinary citizens; and begun to establish—with Cuban assistance—the largest army and the most elaborate domestic police apparatus in Central America.

In 1980, again before the change of administrations in Washington, the Sandinista Front had peremptorily increased the size of the Council of State to 47 members and reapportioned the seats in its favor; postponed promised elections indefinitely; signed a party-to-party agreement with the Communist party of the Soviet Union; and begun to harass the leaders of Nicaragua's Permanent Commission on Human Rights.

In March 1981, two months after the Reagan administration took office, the *contras* were organized. For most of that year they were a force

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* *Nicaragua: A Revolution in the Family*, Random House, 380 pp., $19.95.

† *The Masaryk Case* (new edition), David R. Godine, 398 pp., $9.95.

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of negligible military significance, a few hundred men recruited mainly from the ranks of Somoza's National Guard by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and rather inexpertly advised by Argentine military officers and counterintelligence agents. At the time it was common for the Sandinistas themselves to poke fun at the *contras*—calling attention to their impotence and extremely limited political appeal.

Then in June 1981, the chief of the new Popular Sandinista Army, Comandante Humberto Ortega, made a secret speech to a gathering of military officers avowing that "without *sandinismo* we cannot be Marxist-Leninist, and *sandinismo* without Marxism-Leninism cannot be revolutionary," and admitting that the existing pacts with other, more moderate political forces had been mere expedients to get rid of Somoza, hold off U.S. military intervention, and keep the economy intact. This did not mean, he assured his audience, that the Sandinista Front had any intention of caving into a "bourgeois" political program; indeed, all non-Marxists who had been allies in the struggle against the dictatorship were now declared to be the enemy.

A few weeks later Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders visited Managua to discuss a possible *démarche* in relations. Enders made four demands of the Sandinistas—that they withdraw from arms trafficking into El Salvador; that they slow or cease their own military build-up, which was upsetting the regional arms balance; that they take steps to fulfill their promises of economic and political pluralism at home; and that they temper their association with Cuba and the Soviet bloc. In exchange, he offered a resumption of U.S. economic aid (which had actually been suspended in the last days of the *Carter* administration), and stern measures to prevent any exile force from attacking Nicaragua from U.S. territory or with U.S. assistance. His offer was categorically turned aside. Since the Enders mission in August 1981, relations between the Nicaraguan government and the United States have continued to deteriorate.

THE real conflict, however, has not been the one between Managua and Washington; it has been the growing antagonism between the Sandinista Front and the people in whose name it presumes to speak. This conflict was, in a sense, inevitable, because a society can be organized effortlessly along Marxist lines only if the vast majority of the population has absolutely nothing to lose. Of course no such society has ever existed, and Nicaragua is no exception. By one authoritative estimate, in 1978 some 180,000 Nicaraguan families possessed property in one form or another,* which when increased conservatively by a multiplier of five amounts to 900,000 people, or just short of one-third of the population. Whether such people qualify for the term "middle class" (or even "bourgeoisie") is a matter of sociological judgment or of one's political vocabulary. But so numerous a stratum would normally give pause to any government intent upon restructuring society—unless, of course, the government in question believed that even an extremely modest stake in the existing system of private property automatically rendered one morally deficient.

In the United States and elsewhere there is considerable confusion about the private sector in Nicaragua because the regime continues to insist that it favors a mixed economy, and because it can point to the fact that slightly more than half of the means of production formally remains in private hands. However, shortly after the fall of Somoza, all banks, shipping, and export-marketing firms were taken over by the state, so that from the beginning the government was in a position to control the disbursement of credit and foreign exchange. By 1983, the public sector was receiving more than six times as much credit as the private, at far more favorable rates of interest. This, in conjunction with high taxes and price controls, has allowed the Sandinistas quietly to absorb private business through what appear to be perfectly legal procedures—first bankruptcy, then the takeover of defunct enterprises by their creditors (that is, the state).

This process has been slower than the Sandinistas' ideological predilections would normally dictate, because they understand that the apparent survival of a private sector in Nicaragua is a political fact which strongly influences their credibility in Western Europe and the United States. Then, too, some industries like cotton are highly centralized and capital-intensive, and require annual reinfusions of capital. This explains why cotton planters have been favored with relatively higher prices for their crop than producers of coffee, who tend to be small farmers without the kinds of skills, education, and capital which would allow them to emigrate, and whose fixed investment—in this case, the plants—is not readily transferable.†

But the most important indicator of the Sandinistas' ultimate intentions toward the private sector is the fact that they have deprived its umbrella organization, COSEP, of the political representation it originally received in the Council of State. As serious Marxists, they understand that economic power cannot be artificially separated from political participation: if the one is to be abolished, the other must eventually also be liquidated. In this instance, they are working both

* Arturo Cruz Sequeira, "*Introducción*," in José Luis Velásquez and Arturo Cruz Sequeira, eds., *Nicaragua: regresión en la revolución* (San José, Costa Rica, Editorial Cosmos, forthcoming).

† Forest Colburn and Silvio de Franco, "*Elite agraria en la revolución nicaragüense*," in Velásquez and Sequeira, *Nicaragua*.

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ends against the middle. Properly interpreting the signs of the times, leaders of the private sector have declined to accept periodic assurances of good will in place of concrete acts. Instead, over the past six years there has been a catastrophic flight of capital and managerial skills.

Because they are privileged beings in a society where most people are poor, businessmen in Nicaragua cannot expect to command much sympathy abroad. But for a variety of reasons the Sandinistas' treatment of COSEP has actually been somewhat gentle compared to that doled out to smaller entrepreneurs. One such group which Shirley Christian singles out for special attention is the market vendors. These are penny capitalists, many of them women, who rise at dawn to set up makeshift stalls in open-air markets, where they sell everything from rice and beans to articles of clothing and children's toys. In the Department of Managua alone, there are some 30,000 such people; she estimates that there may be another 30,000 scattered throughout the provincial market towns.

The problem began in early 1982, when the government suddenly declared that for the foreseeable future sugar would be rationed. Consumers were told that in order to obtain this most basic of items they would have to get a ration card from their local block (surveillance) committee; they were assigned stores according to the neighborhood in which they lived, and specific days on which they could buy their allotment. The stores were either "popular" groceries established by the government or supermarkets expropriated from Somoza or his cronies. The market vendors were not supplied. During the next three years similar measures were enacted for many other basic consumer items, all of which were removed from the normal channels of supply and demand.

To ask why sugar (and later rice, beans, corn, milk, bananas, cooking oil, and a dozen other articles) came to be rationed in Nicaragua when the country had never before suffered a shortage of foodstuffs is to ask the wrong question. It presupposes that the purpose of the Sandinista government is to encourage agricultural production and widespread consumption, whereas in fact its intention is to utilize food as a means of political control. It is in line with this intention that priorities are organized. Immediately after the revolution, the FSLN created a new agricultural marketing agency, ENABAS, to purchase the harvest from farmers and to provision the urban consumer. This effectively disenfranchised two groups which the government could not control: the vendors themselves and private middlemen, some of whom were simply independent cooperatives. The market vendors have fought back—with demonstrations, passive resistance, participation in the nation's growing underground economy, even at times with rough justice before sunrise when local Sandinista officials display an excess of zeal. But precisely because the government is willing to subordinate the normal imperatives of the market economy to its political agendas, in the end, other things being equal, it will win.

THE creation of ENABAS also put the regime in a position to discipline the farmers, since it was now the only customer for their produce. At first there was no problem because ENABAS paid the farmers more than they would otherwise have received and sold their output at artificially low prices. As time went on, the ordinary rules of economics reasserted themselves, and the agency began to quarrel with producers over prices and also over access to certain essential inputs such as fertilizer and chemicals. Eventually, farmers saw no reason to produce beyond their immediate needs, and there was a dramatic drop in several basic foodstuffs, notably corn and beans. One cannot assume, however, that the Sandinistas found the shortages wholly disconcerting. Shortages, after all, justify the introduction of ration cards, which in turn enhance the importance and power of the block committees and also apparently underscore the need for agencies like ENABAS, which ostensibly address what is, in fact, a very serious national crisis.

The Sandinistas have also had their problems with the peasantry. Though historically much of the productive agricultural land in Nicaragua has been concentrated in large agribusiness combines, the country has always had a fairly numerous smallholder class and an even larger group of tenant farmers who worked subsistence plots. Unlike El Salvador, moreover, Nicaragua also has plenty of vacant land, and in fact in the days of Somoza there was even a small and poorly funded program to encourage homesteading in virgin territories. There was, then, a "land question" in Nicaragua, but it was far less pressing than in many Central American countries. Further, the immediate expropriation in 1979 of 2.75 million acres formerly belonging to Somoza, his associates, or simply people whom the FSLN decided to call *somocistas* in order to take their land, presumably equipped the government with a large store of rural properties with which it could abundantly satisfy peasant aspirations to ownership.

The difficulty has been, of course, that like Marxist revolutionaries everywhere, the Sandinistas do not look with favor upon private property in land, even on a very modest scale. Consequently, all the larger properties were converted into "state farms" or government-run cooperatives, and in many respects—though not all—the condition of peasants on these lands is not very different from what it was under Somoza. Peasants now receive training in literacy, to which, however, are attached ceaseless political indoctrination and what must be enormously boring classes in "anti-imperialism." Peasants are also encouraged to offer their sons for service in the new Popular Sandinista Army (ESP).

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All this, but especially the failure of the Sandinistas to award individual titles of ownership (as they often quite uninhibitedly promised to do before 1979), has provided the *contras* with a ready source of food, recruits, and intelligence, particularly in the northern provinces bordering on Honduras. But the *contras* draw as well from smallholders who fear that they will be next in the sequence of expropriations, or at any rate forced to sell their produce at whatever prices ENABAS deems politically expedient. In some areas, matters have become so serious that the Sandinistas have had to evacuate these communities forcibly to areas far from military operations, or even to grant a limited number of deeds.

BEFORE the revolution, Nicaragua possessed a small labor movement not notable for its political militance. This is not surprising: industrial workers received wages which put them considerably above other manual workers, and, as Shirley Christian acutely observes, "people who would be working in factories in more developed countries were, in Nicaragua, making their livings as small entrepreneurs"—market vendors, taxi drivers, and so forth. Again, not surprisingly, the labor federation which represented most industrial workers was closely tied in with the Somoza regime. Almost immediately after their victory, the Sandinistas essentially took over this trade-union movement and renamed it the *Central Sandinistas de Trabajadores* (CST), placing at its head a small group of activists from the underground days. By mid-1981, the CST accounted for roughly half the union membership; the other half was divided between the FTN, affiliated with the Christian Democratic International, and the FTU, with links to the AFL-CIO.

As with the peasantry, political indoctrination rather than the advancement of group interests has become the most important object of the CST. Wage increases and strikes have been prohibited, and when some workers have dared to contravene the orders of their putative leaders, they have been threatened with conscription into the army. Independent labor federations have found it increasingly difficult to operate, and as they face a state which will, in time, be the employer of sole resort, their future existence is in serious doubt.

THE Nicaraguans who have suffered most from Sandinista rule are the Indians of the Atlantic coast—the Miskito, Rama, and Sumo peoples. Separated from "Spanish" Nicaragua by geography, language, culture, and religion, they were neglected by all governments prior to 1979. For many years the only outsiders interested in their welfare were Moravian missionaries (which perhaps explains why so many of their leaders are ordained pastors of that denomination). While the Miskitos did not participate in the uprising against Somoza, several of their younger leaders studying at the time at the National University in Managua were persuaded to offer public support to the new regime in exchange for promises of autonomy and communal control of forest lands.

Almost immediately difficulties ensued. The Atlantic coast is the region of Nicaragua closest to Cuba and also the historic route of U.S. Marine landings in the 1920's. The Sandinistas' principal interest in the region was military, and by 1981 some 7,000 troops were stationed there, disrupting the peace of the inhabitants by constant maneuvers, target practice, and the careless use of tracked vehicles. Nor did the Miskitos take kindly to the Cuban doctors and teachers who poured into the area, and who seemed more interested in raising the Indians' "political consciousness" than in teaching or healing. It was difficult, too, for people in the care of two or three generations of Moravian pastors to repose much confidence in leaders who boasted of being "scientific atheists."

The real difficulty, however, was the condescending attitude of the Sandinista leadership toward indigenous peoples. Luis Carrión Cruz, the member of the National Directorate delegated to handle Indian affairs, spoke openly of the Miskitos' "very large ideological backwardness," and refused any serious discussion of communal control of forest lands. The problem was not, of course, collective ownership as such, but the desire of the Sandinistas not to allow the emergence of new forms of property which did not in some way depend upon the state.

These developments led to violent incidents, the jailing of Miskito leaders, and a massive flight of younger Miskitos to Honduras, where they provided fresh troops for the tiny insurgency launched by former National Guardsmen. The Sandinistas responded by forcibly relocating some 15,000 Miskitos and Sumos from their ancestral villages; soldiers burned their homes, churches, and crops as they left. By 1984 it was estimated that at least 25,000 Miskitos, Ramas, and Sumos were in exile in Honduras; another 20,000 had been involuntarily resettled in other parts of the country. The Sandinistas often charm foreign innocents with the frank admission that they have committed "errors" with respect to the Indian communities. But as Shirley Christian notes, they did so with their eyes open: "the priorities were military security and political control. Past promises aside, these things were not negotiable."

THE rapid decline of open political institutions in Sandinista Nicaragua has led to a transformation in the role of the Roman Catholic Church. As in Poland, the Church has become an opposition party *manqué*; though unable to overthrow the regime, it is the most important instrument of serious resistance within the country. A generation or two ago it would have been possible to dismiss this phenomenon as a reactionary hold-

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over from the old regime; such efforts have, indeed, been made, but they do not stand up very well in the light of recent history. The spiritual leader of Nicaragua, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, has long been noted for his liberal views on social and economic issues, and was always one of the most courageous and outspoken opponents of the Somoza dictatorship.

The spectacle of a liberal cleric opposing the Sandinistas is especially discomfiting to well-wishers of the regime in Catholic circles abroad, for the Nicaraguan revolution has become one of the two or three most important repositories of hope for those clergy and laity broadly identified with the movement known as "liberation theology." For these people, ideologically speaking, there can be no disjunction between a Church committed to the interests of the poor and a government which formally embraces and practices Marxism. This notion dovetails with another held by the government—namely, that since (according to a 1981 poll) 80 percent of the Nicaraguans identify "religion" as the most important value in their lives, the regime cannot afford a direct confrontation with the Church. Rather, the Church must be absorbed and controlled. Hence the creation of a "People's Church"—a caucus (to use conventional political terminology) within the Body of Christ that either is declared to be, or at any rate soon will become, coterminous with it.

Nicaragua's revolutionary Christians have set about this application of Leninist principles to religious organization with some very distinct advantages. They have received generous donations from overseas, particularly from the World Council of Churches ($176,000), the National Council of Churches ($365,329), the Methodists ($100,000), the Presbyterian Program to Fight World Hunger ($10,000), and the United Methodists ($25,000). All this money has allowed them to maintain a full-time staff, mostly foreigners, who operate out of the Valdivieso Center in Managua. They are viewed with distinct benevolence by the regime, which periodically supplies them with access to controlled media, transportation, and other facilities (in exchange for which they periodically appear to give witness to visiting co-religionists).

More important still has been the way that the Sandinista *turbas*, or mobs, have attacked bishops and priests loyal to Cardinal Obando, including, most spectacularly, the Pope himself on the occasion of his visit to Managua in March 1983. The government or its dependencies have also harassed or expelled leaders of Protestant denominations insufficiently *aggiornado*, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Moravians, Seventh Day Adventists, and some evangelicals. And it has shut down Radio Católica, the property of the Roman Catholic archdiocese, the country's sole remaining independent station. Moreover, a person's religious views have become a crucial factor of survival in an increasingly difficult (and government-controlled) job market.

Under these circumstances, one would have the right to expect the Church in Nicaragua to be, at the very least, deeply divided, and this is the way many left-wing Christians in the United States and elsewhere have described it. Yet after a conscientious effort to determine the relative strength of the traditional and "people's" Churches, Shirley Christian found that most parish priests, including a majority of the foreign-born, usually support their bishops. Further, she discovered that "generally . . . the liberation priests did not attract big crowds to their masses." Cardinal Obando's dispute with the Sandinistas has made him the most popular man in the country, and the only reason the regime has not attacked him more strongly is out of fear of increasing his stature even further. She closes her survey with an interesting question—if the Sandinistas ever do succeed in subverting the Church hierarchy, will they continue to feel the need for their revolutionary Christian friends?

A REGIME which seeks to impose Marxist patterns of social control upon an unwilling population, and is willing to sacrifice its economy in the process, is bound to find an uncommon need for instruments of force and violence. This explains why, among other things, the Sandinistas have raised an army larger than that of all other Central American nations combined. It accounts for the need for massive foreign assistance from countries like Cuba, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Bulgaria, whose major, perhaps only, real contribution to the armature of modern life is the art of domestic surveillance. It also explains the steady pattern of Soviet deliveries of military materiel to Nicaragua, including (up until 1983) smaller transport planes, helicopters, and tankers, as well as heavy weapons like tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, and aircraft. Thus, what at first glance appears to be an exclusively internal affair of the Nicaraguans—how to organize their own society—becomes a matter of legitimate security concern to their neighbors, and to the United States.

Such efforts at the Marxist reorganization of society will also lead opponents—when their patience and good will are finally exhausted—to grasp at whatever violent alternatives are available. In the Nicaraguan case, this has meant a veritable flowering and transformation of the *contras*. In a mere five years the *contras* have grown from perhaps 300 to 15,000 men, which is precisely three times the number of men who fought Somoza at the height of the civil war in 1979. There have been some qualitative changes as well: the preponderance of former National Guardsmen has dwindled, so that today only nine of the fifty-four commanders can be so described; as for the soldiers themselves, they now consist largely of peasants, shopkeepers, Miskito

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Indians, and, on the southern front, even former Sandinistas.

At the same time, there has been a drastic change in the political leadership of the resistance. It now includes not merely conservatives with good anti-Somoza credentials like Adolfo Calero and Fernando Chamorro, but social democrats and liberals who collaborated with the Sandinistas during their initial period of power—Arturo Cruz, former president of the Central Bank and ambassador to the United States; Alfonso Robelo, former member of the Council of State; and Edén Pastora Gómez, who as "Comandante Zero" was the most important combat hero of the revolution and later served it as Deputy Minister of Defense. The fact that so many commentators in the United States continue to talk about the *contras* in terms appropriate to five years ago says far more about the state of affairs in this country than the situation in Nicaragua or its immediate environs.

Partly as a result of such talk, Congress voted in May 1985 to cut off all aid to the *contras*. The day after the vote, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega went off to Moscow to confer with his allies —much to the horror and consternation of Congress. Precisely why so many Congressmen were in such an uproar over Ortega's trip—which was far from his first—is something of a mystery. Perhaps it was because in one single act Ortega had eloquently demonstrated something many Nicaraguans have known for six years: that the course of events in their country is following a logic of its own, not reacting to provocations from the United States. Members of Congress could have known this long ago had they simply focused upon the way the Sandinistas have treated their own people, instead of trying to squeeze the entire contents of Nicaraguan reality into the narrow tube of bilateral relations or, worse still, into the tiny prism of partisan politics. There is still time for them to reverse course, but they must act quickly, or all of us—Nicaraguans, Hondurans, Costa Ricans, and ultimately Americans—will reap a very bitter harvest indeed.

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The Politics of Yiddish

Ruth R. Wisse

LIKE the kibbutz children in the Israeli joke who think that they will begin to speak Yiddish once they become grandparents, most people consider Yiddish a harmless property of Jewish old age and of a toothless past. With ignorance and distance the inclination to sentimentality increases, so that today the association of Yiddish with nostalgia is almost irresistible. Even practiced speakers and engaged students of Yiddish tend to approach the language and its culture protectively, with the instincts of tender curators.

The main sources of this solicitude are not hard to identify. The destruction of the Yiddish-speaking communities of Europe at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators sanctified Yiddish very much against its will. As long as the East European Jews and their peripatetic children were still flushed with vitality and shamelessly in love with life, they were among the most vilified people in history, accused by others (and consequently by some among their own kin) of cupidity, vulgarity, voracious ambition, and repressive clannishness, of ignorance, corruption, unwholesomeness, and much else. Posthumously, by way of compensation, they have been granted the affection that would never have been theirs as long as they were eating their garlic and belching.

The bloodless, altogether peaceable decline of Yiddish in America has also engendered regret and guilt. A generation of Jewish children, encouraged by their parents to adopt English with grateful enthusiasm, eager to make their way in American society, only began to look back fondly on Yiddish once they were unassailably English-speaking. For them and for their own children, forays back into the world of Yiddish are bound up with reminiscence, with evocative aromas and tastes, and with legends of richness-in-poverty. The very qualities that originally drove young men and women from their parents' clutches now lure them back, a lifetime later, to the pursuit of a lost embrace.

In some ways this sentiment for Yiddish seems harmless, even salutary. Thus, five years ago a young man with an M.A. in Yiddish language and literature launched a major book-reclamation project so that the thousands of Yiddish volumes accruing to heirs who could no longer read the language would find their way safely to storage (and perhaps library shelves) instead of to the local dump. The National Yiddish Book Exchange now stores and catalogues some 300,000 Yiddish books. The Exchange, a very modern American enterprise, occupies a historic landmark building in Amherst, Massachusetts, where Emily Dickinson once thought that the soul could select its own society, then shut the door. Yet the project would not have attracted the required funds or sponsorship without the strong appeal it makes to nostalgia, in recognition of which its publication, *The Book Peddler*, cultivates a folksy, quasi-Yiddish style, and shows on its cover an old Jew atop a horse-drawn cart.

Beyond this kind of nostalgia, the mystique of Yiddish and of what is called *Yiddishkeyt* plays a significant role in Jewish culture at large, particularly among those uncomfortable with the religious definition of the Jew but nevertheless desirous of retaining their Jewish identity. The word *Yiddishkeyt* means Jewishness, or Judaism, but from the beginning of this century, and particularly in the period between the wars, it began to assume a modern, ideological connotation. For secular descendants of Yiddish-speaking families, *Yiddishkeyt* has come to signify both the culture that is embodied in the Yiddish language and a standard of ethical conduct that preserves the essence of Judaism without the requirements of ritual and law. *Yiddishkeyt*, in this view, engenders *mentshlekhkeyt*, humaneness, an ideal of behavior in which the whole religious discipline of Jewish life is transmuted into the practice of kindness and decency. Thus, in a recent issue of *Jewish Currents*, the journal of the Association for the Promotion of Jewish Secularism, a regular contributor writes: "As a secular Jewish woman, I can revel in my Jewish identity. I feel my internal *Yiddishkeyt* and *mentshlekhkeyt*." These two words appear so often in the pages of the magazine as to be interchangeable.

Jews who hold on to, or reach back for, the *Yiddishkeyt* of Yiddish thus yearn not merely for a declining language but for the social and politi-

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cal ideal that seems embedded in it. They look back to a time when Yiddish seemed sufficiently strong, and sufficiently inclusive, to encompass Jewishness in its entirety. Nor do they rest content with idealizing the past; for them, *Yiddishkeyt* continues to be a model for the present and the future. Surely an ideal so attractive is worth examining in greater detail.

WHEN the German philosopher Herder formulated his conception of language as the expressive vehicle of the national soul, he did not have in mind the Jews. But language did play a role of exceptional importance in the self-definition of modern Jews. The Yiddish language, the creation of European Jewry, was comparable in its distinctiveness to the vernaculars of other European nations. By the end of the 19th century, as Jews tried to adapt to the promise of emancipation, there were many in Eastern Europe who thought that Yiddish might help to sustain a community rapidly losing its earlier sources of cohesion in religion and lacking the compensating factor of a country of its own. They hoped, in effect, to reverse the process of language formation: as the community had once generated an independent language to express its cultural autonomy, so that same language would now cement a culturally autonomous community.

One of the most forceful proponents of this view was Max Weinreich, whose great masterwork, *The History of the Yiddish Language* (1973; English-language edition, 1980), traces the development of Yiddish in fascinating detail from its origins, about a thousand years ago, on the banks of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers in the area Jews called Loter. Weinreich insists that "language reflects life," and that linguistic evolution cannot be understood without a knowledge of the entire culture. Yiddish, the language of Ashkenazi Jewry, was part of an entire system of Jewishness. To drive the point home, he calls Yiddish "the language of *derekh haShas*."

No one is more preoccupied with language than linguists, and Weinreich obviously knew what he was doing when he chose to characterize Yiddish by an arcane term that is untranslatable into a non-Jewish language. Just what is *derekh haShas*? In the writings of Rashi (1040-1105), the great Ashkenazi exegete, where Weinreich apparently discovered the expression, it figures as a pedagogic term only. Weinreich, however, uses it to denote the whole cultural-historical way of life of the Ashkenazi communities from Rashi's time to his own.

At first glance, the term seems to suggest a life of religion: *derekh* means "way" and *Shas* (an acronym for *shisha sedarim*, the six orders of the Mishnah) is a popular synonym for the Talmud. But as Weinreich immediately reminds us, "religion" is a modern concept, one that assumes the existence of a sphere of life beyond the boundaries of religion. In Jewishness prior to the 18th century no such boundary existed. "Up to the emancipation Ashkenaz did not operate in terms of religion *and* the world; the culture system of Jewishness *was* the world." Thus Yiddish, the language of *derekh haShas*, was the collective expression of all that Jews thought and felt and did.

There seems no end to the loving examples that Weinreich is able to cite to demonstrate the interrelatedness of *yiddishe verter* and *yiddishe vertn*, Yiddish/Jewish words and Jewish values. Pears that ripen in the autumn are called *kol-nidre barelekh*, after the prayer recited at the opening of the autumn Yom Kippur service; because of a perceived pun on the word *mern*, carrots, and *zikh mern*, to increase oneself, Jews in certain regions ate carrots on Rosh Hashanah in fulfillment of the prayer, "May our merits increase"; and so on and on. An intelligent outsider can get an excellent introduction to traditional Jewish culture through Weinreich's *History of the Yiddish Language*, which animates the Jewish way of life as few other studies have done.

But Weinreich's book, in addition to being a study of culture, is itself a cultural document. We take nothing away from his scholarship when we recognize that his history, like much of his earlier work, was conceived as part of an engaged ideological struggle. When Weinreich introduces the word "fusion" rather than "mixture" to describe the way various sources consolidated in the new language of Yiddish, he is not only refining the vocabulary of his discipline, he is arguing for a certain vision of national existence. The organic term, fusion, stresses the absorptive and creative capacities of the Jews, rejecting models of separatism on the one hand, derivative dependency on the other. Yiddish, according to Weinreich, is not a piebald mix, a sackful of borrowings, but the rich distillation of centuries of growth. "Ashkenazi Jewishness was not general German life plus a number of specific Jewish supplementary traits but a distinct sphere of life, a culture system." Weinreich repeatedly warns against the mechanistic notion that Jews at first spoke German, and then recast it in their own manner. He offers proof instead of a vital European community, drawing from its indigenous sources as it continually interacted with the surrounding world. Thus, to take one small but typical illustration, though the greeting *gut morgn* (good morning) among Jews is very close to the German *guten Morgen*, the reply, *gut yor* (good year), has no German equivalent, so that the Jewish saying, *vos far a gut morgn, aza gut yor* (the greeting you extend is commensurate with the one you receive; or, you get what you give), is strictly indigenous.

While not a programmatic document, Weinreich's ingenious interpretation of Yiddish as the language of *derekh haShas* points simultaneously in two polemical directions. The term itself, linguistically distinct from either Germanic or Slavic tongues, and originating with the great teacher

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and rabbi of the Ashkenazim, confirms the Jewishness of the Jewish language and dramatizes its thoroughly specific evolution. At the same time, though the Jewish language for Weinreich is based on the Jewish religion, it resembles other European vernaculars in serving as the expressive instrument for the entire people in every facet of their lives, and is thus not *bound* by its religious sources. In fact, much of the latter part of Weinreich's study shows how Yiddish was enriched by the tensions of secularization. When a modern Jew says, *host es kosher fardint*—you've earned your (kosher) right to this—the religious terminology has been neutralized, leaving nice traces of the past in modern usage. The expression, *es toyg oyf kapores*—it's good for nothing—derives from the custom of whirling a sacrificial bird as part of the Yom Kippur ritual of atonement (*kapore*). In his casual use of the phrase, a modern Jew gives vestigial life to a religious rite he would no longer consider performing.

ALTHOUGH he does not make the connection himself, Weinreich's reminder that religion became a separate category for Jews only after the Enlightenment helps to explain why Yiddish also became an issue at the same time. Before the Enlightenment, Jews had spoken Yiddish with no more self-awareness than Poles spoke Polish or Ukrainians Ukrainian. It was only after the Enlightenment had consigned religion to the individual conscience, and the promise of the emancipation held out offers of equal citizenship, that the question of distinctive language became problematic. Did not "citizenship" connote a reciprocal relation between the Jews and the state, and if so, was not a common tongue its first requirement? Particular conditions might have dictated whether a Jew would adopt the local language or continue to use his own, but the question itself pressed on the Jews and made them aware of their speech as a matter of choice.

The challenges to Yiddish that emerged from the emancipation were varied and numerous. There were Jewish Enlighteners who declared Yiddish an inferior borrowing from German; Hebraists who sought a purified national renaissance in the ancient tongue; assimilationists who urged adoption of local languages as part of a policy of acculturation. Without lingering over the fine points of the debate* we may note that by the latter part of the 19th century, thoughtful Jews who continued to use their native tongue could not do so without conscious intention. From all but the simplest stratum of Jewish society, Yiddish demanded an attitude.

When the first Yiddish newspaper of Eastern Europe, the *Kol Mevaser* ("Heralding Voice"), began publication in 1862, the editor and his main contributors felt it necessary to publish defenses of the language in which it was appearing. In one such apology, an allegorical poem, Yehudis, the Yiddish language, berates Yidl, the Jewish people, for preferring other women to his own wife:

> The old curse
> appears again:
> other wives are attractive,
> your own is plain.
> Well, they were once uglier than I am today,
> They prattled and scribbled like children at play.
> But they had the good fortune to be tended and nurtured.
> That's why they're grand dames, competent and cultured.

Yidl, far from denying his infidelity, confesses to a wandering eye. He also admits to his wife that he still longs for her predecessor, that splendid aristocrat, Hebrew, whose pedigree contrasts so sharply with Yehudis's lowly origins. His first wife was the Holy Tongue; Yehudis is but jargon. Understanding though she is of her husband's undying love, Yehudis reminds him that she, as the mother of his children, is his current responsibility, and urges him to reconcile himself to an imperfect reality.

All early defenders of Yiddish argued from a similar position of weakness. Yet given the populist spirit of the late 19th century, this weakness could also be turned to some advantage. The impoverishment of Yiddish, corresponding to the socioeconomic deprivation of the Jews, was ironically what commended it to the attention of Jewish intellectuals. If one writer could describe Yiddish as a mere handmaiden to Hebrew, and another as the artificial leg on which the crippled Jewish nation had learned to stand, for an emerging cadre of class-conscious young Jews the lowly associations of the language began to prove strongly in its favor.

In 1908 a World Conference for Yiddish was convened in Czernowitz, then under Hapsburg rule. The purpose of the conference was to gain recognition for the mother tongue, although the brochure announcing the conference (which, incidentally, was conceived in New York City) manifested more compassion for Yiddish than pride in it. Other languages, it said,

> are not allowed to run wild over the language-world, contracting all kinds of diseases and deformities that may even be fatal. But no one looks after Yiddish. Thousands of Yiddish words are carelessly exchanged for ones in German, Russian, and English. The living laws of the language . . . are not codified, so their existence remains in doubt. And everyone uses his own spelling because a uniform system of orthography has not yet been created.

The organizers of the conference, as well as its most renowned participant, the Yiddish writer

* Joshua A. Fishman's *Never Say Die!: A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters* (Mouton, 1981) contains extensive bibliographical and historical information about these issues.

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and publicist I.L. Peretz, pushed through a resolution declaring Yiddish a national language of the Jewish people, so that the sickly child might in the future be properly tended. Their call for recognition was directed in part to the local Austrian government, then conducting an inquiry into the status of languages and ethnic minorities in the empire to determine which would be granted official standing. But in even greater measure it was directed at the Jews themselves, who were being asked to take responsibility for their own creation.

The conference also attracted a group of young Jewish socialists who wanted Yiddish declared not *a* but *the* national language of the Jewish people. For them, the relatively lowly standing of Yiddish vis-à-vis Hebrew corresponded to the fundamental class distinction between proletariat and bourgeoisie; they interpreted the struggle for Yiddish as part of the international struggle for social justice. For these proletarian poets and publicists, Yiddish became a foil for *negidish*, a Hebrew-root word that means belonging to the rich, with their implied culpability for the condition of the poor.

In its own way, the extraordinary vitality of Yiddish literature from the middle of the 19th century onward helped to confirm the sociopolitical image of the language as the property of the masses. This vitality derived from the rootedness of Yiddish literature in East European Jewish life. But Yiddish did not belong equally to all strata of that life; most Jews, as soon as they moved to a large city, or pursued a general education, or tried to improve their economic condition, reached for another language. Thus in its richest and purest form Yiddish remained bound to the home, the house of study, the marketplace, the artisan's workbench. The best writers realized that this was where Yiddish flourished, and the literature they produced was destined to remain at its most "natural" where Yiddish was itself spoken most naturally, among the poor and the simple and the devout, among the "folk."

I.L. Peretz's beginnings as a Yiddish prose writer offer an illustration of the resulting problem. In 1890 Peretz became a member of a team of statisticians hired by a wealthy Jewish convert to Christianity, Jan Bloch, to investigate the economic condition of Jews in the Polish small towns. As he gathered information he concluded that statistics could not effectively convey what he saw and heard. In a series of sketches, later published as *Impressions of a Provincial Tour through the Tomashov District in the Year 1890*, he undertook to describe what was really happening in the *shtetlakh*, and to communicate "*vos es zogt dos folk*," what the people were saying. The work is brilliantly vivid, one of the masterpieces of Yiddish literature, and its language is exceptionally nuanced, especially where the narrator lets the Jews "speak for themselves." Yet when Peretz wrote in Yiddish about the modern Jewish intellectual milieu, the prose creaks with the effort of being applied to situations in which it was not used.

To take another example: the best Yiddish speaker of the past century, certainly the most famous Yiddish orator, was Chaim Zhitlowsky (1865-1943), who was elected to the second Russian Duma in 1906 and after his immigration to America in 1908 became the leading theoretician of Diaspora nationalism and "Yiddishism" (of which more below). Zhitlowsky's command of Jewish and non-Jewish thought, his passionately held political ideas, and his genius as a popularizer were all brilliantly deployed in lectures that attracted hundreds and sometimes thousands of listeners. They are collected in over a dozen volumes.

Yet to compare any paragraph of Zhitlowsky's with any paragraph of Sholem Aleichem's Tevye the Dairyman, the most famous fictional character in Yiddish literature, is to end the contest before it begins. The surpassing richness of Tevye's idiom, the natural rhythms of his speech, and even the range of his vocabulary contrast painfully with the stiffness of Zhitlowsky's style. It could hardly be otherwise. In creating Tevye, Sholem Aleichem was able to exploit the full range of the Yiddish language—precisely because Tevye's limited circumstances and traditional way of life kept him within the sphere of Yiddish and its (abundant) resources. Yiddish was Tevye's only true language, the instrument of all his inventiveness, the expressive vehicle for all his thoughts and feelings. Whatever he may have read in Hebrew or heard in Ukrainian he drew confidently into his own tongue, deepening its wit. Of Zhitlowsky quite the opposite is true. As profoundly as he loved Yiddish, it was only one of the several languages in which he wrote and spoke, not the language of his higher education, or of the society in which he moved, or of the philosophic quest on which he was embarked.

This contrast between the resourceful Yiddish of the poor and the poor Yiddish of the resourceful is one of the permanent features of Yiddish culture until the 1920's. It is small wonder that Jewish socialists and populists of every stripe could identify their cause with Yiddish literary culture, and consider it a reflection of their own ideals. Thus, when the Jewish Workers Bund of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia affirmed its dedication to socialism within a specifically Jewish framework, what framework could it have had in mind other than Yiddish and the culture of Yiddish? A Jew who lived in accordance with the religious tradition could presumably maintain his Jewishness in Spanish as well as English, in German as well as Yiddish, or even in modern Hebrew. A secular Zionist could abandon religious practice and many of the "trappings" of Jewish culture, secure in the belief that statehood would generate a new national identity. The Jewish Left, however, had only its culture to set it apart from the Polish Left and the Russian Left, and that culture, stripped of its religious content, added up to Yiddish—the language, the folklore, the literature.

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There even emerged a concept of "Yiddishism" outright, placing language at the center of ideology. Yiddishists argued that only a national language could secure the Jewish people against assimilation, and that the linguistic dualism of Hebrew and Yiddish ought to be set aside in favor of the language of the masses. According to Chaim Zhitlowsky, Yiddish had absorbed the Jewish ethos to such a degree that anyone who spoke it was permeated by the Jewish spirit. In political terms, this linguistic distinctiveness of the Jews suggested that they could continue to exist in Europe and elsewhere as autonomous cultural communities alongside of, but still unabsorbed by, their neighbors.

THE argument over language was waged as fiercely in America as it was in Europe. American Jews did not suffer from official discrimination as they did in Poland, or from official control over their activities as was increasingly the case in the Soviet Union, but they too were faced with what has come to be known as the problem of identity. While Jews with faith continued in the traditions of the synagogue and Jewish religious law, many immigrants felt their Jewishness sufficiently realized in their Yiddish speech, in the Yiddish newspapers they read, in the Yiddish lectures and theaters they attended, in the Yiddish-speaking locals of the trade unions to which they belonged, in all the secular forms of their *Yiddishkeyt*.

The Yiddishists were those who raised this social phenomenon to the level of ideology. But even among them, the politics of Yiddish turned on the argument over its proper domain. For one group, Yiddishism meant a battle call to the entire nation, regardless of class distinctions. Defending Yiddish as the product of a people historically, biologically, and psychologically united, they insisted that Yiddishism could not exclude the Jewish bourgeoisie. A second group objected strongly. The national character of Yiddish, they said, had to do exclusively with its source in the life of Jewish workers, farmers, and the small tradespeople who tomorrow could be among the ranks of the workers or the unemployed.

One of the most eloquent proponents of the latter view was the Yiddish poet, H. Leivick (pseudonym of Leivick Halpern, 1886-1962), who in his youth had been imprisoned in Siberia for revolutionary activity and had made a sensational escape from a sentence of permanent exile. To Leivick the appeal to national unity could not be allowed to obscure the struggle between the rich and the poor, between the exploited and the oppressed. Only the Jewish working class could be considered the legitimate carrier of the Jewish national ideal.

In the spectrum of Yiddishism, this was actually the centrist position. Yiddishists farther to the Left gave their support to Communism, and if necessary subordinated language to politics. Thus, when Leivick complained that the *Freiheit*, the Yiddish-language Communist paper, lacked any appreciation of artistic merit, and was forcing Yiddish writers into a proletarian strait-jacket, the editors mocked his fastidiousness: "Doesn't Leivick understand that one's attitude toward Yiddish is not the most pressing problem of the local Communist movement?" The Communists were simply taking Leivick's own argument to its logical conclusion. If Yiddish was the national instrument of the Jewish working class, surely historical determinism could require its sacrifice to the greater ideal.

This brief summary of the Yiddishist debate as conducted among its American partisans exposes the intrinsic weaknesses of the ideology as a whole. Yiddish had developed out of the religious way of life of the Jews, both to express and to protect Jewish separateness. Yiddishists now hoped that a secular way of life, with no other ideological justification for separateness, could be sustained by language alone. They were soon confronted with the obvious fact that a community with no essential need to maintain itself apart would not, indeed could not, continue to cultivate its own, separate language. Even Yiddish writers and intellectuals, of all Jews those most dependent on their language, raised their children in Polish, Russian, or English.

IF LANGUAGE was incapable of replacing religion as a consolidating national force, neither could it substitute for territory. When Chaim Zhitlowsky proposed in 1928 that "Czernowitz provide the alternative to Basle" (the meeting place of the founding Zionist Congress of 1897), he was saying that language could be the stabilizing force of a modern Jewish nation in place of the homeland that the Zionist program offered. Unfortunately, the symmetry between these two ideals was only apparent. Zionism may have been "utopian" (as the Yiddishists claimed) in striving for a state the Jews did not yet have, but it was predicated on the commonest of all models of national existence. Yiddishism, by contrast, despite being anchored in social fact, was conceptually utopian in its expectation that Jews would continue to maintain their exceptional character through the ersatz-motherland of culture.* The rapid rate of linguistic assimilation

* The insubstantiality of the Yiddishist idea may explain some of the enthusiasm that Yiddishists showed for the Jewish autonomous region of Birobidzhan, an area allocated by the Soviet Union in 1928 for Jewish settlement, with Yiddish as the official language. This kind of project appeared to flesh out Zhitlowsky's comparison of Czernowitz with Basle. A territorially-based Yiddish community somewhere in the world, established, like the settlement in Palestine, on agrarian and communal ideals, lent the politics of Yiddish at least a modicum of credibility. Zhitlowsky's enthusiasm for Birobidzhan did not wane even after Stalin sealed off the area from foreign visitors, liquidated its supportive committees, and began the purges that bear his name.

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among secular Jews in the United States and in Poland undercut these hopes even as they were being formulated.

But the most serious weakness of Yiddishism was the association of language with class and with the ideology of social reform. No doubt the image of Yiddish as the language of the oppressed played a significant role in the history of the Jewish labor movement, and confirmed its intrinsic worth for many young activists. Moreover, the Yiddish organizations and institutions created by Jewish socialists and Communists certainly promoted Yiddish in the short run—but not without placing it fatally on permanent probation. Among all other peoples language was understood to be a function of nationhood, not of class, of the national genius in all its aspects, the perverse and destructive as well as the heroic and admirable. The transfer of a system of values from religion, where it was appropriately lodged, to language, where it was assuredly not, placed upon Yiddish a new burden of exceptionalism, and one for which there was no national consensus.

Most dangerously of all, once the claim for Yiddish was made on the basis of a class ideal, it could always be sacrificed to that ideal. The Communists demonstrated this in their argument with Leivick, when they contended that the national status of the language could justifiably be subordinated to the higher goal of social equality. The brilliant and original American Yiddish writer, Moishe Nadir (pen-name of Isaac Reis, 1885-1943), came to the same conclusion after a visit to the Soviet Union in 1926. "I must confess that in the nine months I spent in Russia my '*Yiddishkeyt*' melted like snow in the sun. . . . I became convinced that a synagogue does not require a mezuzah on the door." In other words, once the ideals of the revolution had been realized, as Nadir believed they had been in the Soviet Union, the particularism of *Yiddishkeyt* was no longer required, having been incorporated into the sacred body, the "synagogue," of the whole society. Nadir was mistaken about the Soviet Union, but it is hard to argue with the consistency and internal logic of his solution.

THIS is not to deny the powerful cultural and artistic consequences that flowed from the political investment in Yiddish, consequences that will reverberate long after the underlying debates have been forgotten.

The American Yiddish writer, Joseph Opatoshu (1886-1954), believed that "Yiddish is synonymous with *Yiddishkeyt* in modern Jewish life just as *Yiddishkeyt* was synonymous with the Jewish faith thousands of years earlier." Inspired by this idea he wrote a series of modern Yiddish legends, based on historical incidents and folk memories, that reshape the religious experience of earlier generations in the form of secular stories. The weakness of his hypothesis stands in contrast to its impressive artistic demonstration.

There are many such examples in modern Yiddish writing. In 1921 a dashing young Soviet Yiddish poet named Perets Markish (1895-1952) pronounced that the new Yiddish poetry would be in every respect "a child of revolutionary Russia, permeated with its achievements and its mistakes." Markish's radicalization of Yiddish initiated a storm of controversy in which he was probably bested, but not before his hyperbolic outburst had inspired a wild new freedom in his own verse:

The day's not long enough for my idle meandering
And the night too short for my sprawling in beds.
What is the world's dazzle set against the thirst of an eye?
And what barrier the dark of the world against my blazing heart?

My path is too short for the uncertainty of my goal.
For my wild tenacity, the wind is too slothful and sleepy.
What is the world compared with the sacrificial altar toward which I lead myself?
And what's eternity compared with my dying Now?

All that I see, myself, is scanty compared with my lack of desire;
And all earth's arid ground is skimpy for my heel.
What is female flesh set against my flaming desire?
And flaming desire compared with my idleness?

(Translated by Leonard Wolf)*

Markish felt that the destructive energy of the revolution had unfettered Yiddish poetry, making everything possible. What joy there is in this defiant upending of Jewish restraint, of Jewish discipline! When the sheer pleasure of idleness is liberated from the disapproving inhibitions of a tradition that abhorred any waste of time, every kind of conquest becomes possible.

It did not take Perets Markish long to realize many other implications of the revolution's destructive energy. Since he himself was one of its victims, executed among all the other leading figures of Soviet Yiddish literature on August 12, 1952, he does not need us to instruct him posthumously on the limits of his political wisdom. Yet the poetry born of that first blinding moment of release from bondage remains unshakable testimony to its power. The politics of Yiddish was forcibly crushed in the Soviet Union. The art born of its politics remains triumphant.

THIS brings us finally to the reasons for engaging in an analysis of the politics of Yiddish, so long after the topic would appear to have lost its importance. The modern Jewish con-

* This poem will appear in the forthcoming *Penguin Book of Yiddish Poetry*.

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sciousness was shaped in its vernacular, in what was until 1939 the spoken language of the vast majority of Jews. Yiddish became a treasurehouse of poems, stories, dramas, novels, essays, memoirs, songs, and films interpreting the Jews' experiences of themselves and the world. One cannot fully know the process of the Jewish transition into modernity without knowing what Yiddish holds.

But as much as the creative achievement of its artists, the feverish politics of Yiddish was equally important in shaping the modern Jewish consciousness. It was no simple thing for a dispersed religious-ethnic community to transform itself into a modern nation, and even today, when the process is far from complete, there are those who wish that a spiritual substitute could have been found for the old Jewish religious civilization that would not have necessitated a separate national state.

The failed politics of Yiddish offers a bracing study of how desperately and ingeniously Jews tried to reorganize their lives around the secular category of language. They invested it with the full spiritual value of Jewishness. They attributed to it quasi-territorial status. They assigned it sociopolitical functions. They hoped that Yiddish could be the Ark the people would carry eternally in their wanderings and place at the center of their collective soul. The poet Melekh Ravitch went so far as to suggest that a compilation of Yiddish writings be consolidated into a new *tanakh*, a new bible, to inspire the secular Jewish generations of the future.

That the transference to Yiddish of independent value or cohesive powers was mistaken, we know from the absence of any second-generation Yiddishist or *Yiddishkeyt* community. In his admirable cultural and social history of the Jewish Lower East Side, *World of Our Fathers*, Irving Howe, one of the warmest contemporary interpreters of *Yiddishkeyt*, says that the term refers to "that phase of Jewish history during the past two centuries which is marked by the prevalence of Yiddish as the language of the East European Jews and by the growth among them of a culture resting mainly on that language." He casts his definition in the broadest possible terms: "The culture of *Yiddishkeyt* is no longer strictly that of traditional Orthodoxy, yet it retains strong ties to the religious past. It takes on an increasingly secular character yet is by no means confined to the secularist elements among Yiddish-speaking Jews. It refers to a way of life, a shared experience, which goes beyond opinion or ideology."

Howe identifies *Yiddishkeyt* with the beginnings of emancipation two hundred years ago. But in fact the Yiddish cultural phenomenon he writes about is barely as old as this century—and, more critically, it never produced a second generation. The most important test of a way of life is its ability to sustain itself; by this standard, *Yiddishkeyt* failed even where the Jews themselves survived and flourished. It is not simply that the children of the Yiddishists no longer speak to their children in Yiddish. The heirs of Moses Mendelssohn converted to Christianity, yet the Reform movement in Judaism which he inspired is still actively represented in Jewish institutional life today. Yiddishism, which was meant to serve Jewish cohesion, had no such self-regenerating powers, and *Yiddishkeyt* was but a transitional phase in which a secular generation enjoyed the fruits of a religious civilization.

Unquestionably, many of these secular products of religious Jewish homes really did feel themselves imbued with the prophetic tradition, now translated by them into a concern for the poor and the oppressed of all nations. Unquestionably, too, many of them believed that this concern, which they called *mentshlekhkeyt* but which was really socialism with a Jewish face, was capable of universalizing Jewish teachings and transforming religious ideals into political facts. But the quotient of self-delusion in such thinking was very high. And it also entailed a moral hubris that they proved singularly unwilling to face.

The Jewish religious way of life had never claimed innate moral superiority for the Jews, only for the disciplined framework within which they undertook to live. Chosenness meant the voluntary submission of Jews to a body of imperatives that could civilize even the most imperfect of peoples. Anyone who became a Jew and followed the prescribed Jewish way of life would be exalted in the same way. By contrast, Jews who believed in the transforming power of politics, not religion, and who equated *Yiddishkeyt* with *mentshlekhkeyt*, were practicing a form of ethnic arrogance that was not only foreign but repugnant to the Jewish tradition they implicitly invoked as its justification.

In his later years the American Yiddish poet, Jacob Glatstein (1896-1971), addressed a poem entitled "*Yiddishkeyt*" to his fellow writers, mourning and mocking the state of their art. He concludes with a powerful plea:

> Nostalgia *Yiddishkeyt* is a lullaby for old men
> gumming soaked white challah.
> Shall we provide the soft crumbs,
> the lifeless and hollow words,
> we who had dreamed
> of new Men of the Great Assembly?

For Glatstein, the religious past of Jewishness was too weighty, and what it required of its descendants too substantial, to be reduced to cloying sentimentality. His charge to the culture of *Yiddishkeyt* of his day may be addressed with equal benefit to those who would seek to prolong it today.

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Out of the Drawer & Into the West

Fernanda Eberstadt

IN THE last few years, the recent works of such contemporary Soviet writers as Vassily Aksyonov, Vladimir Maximov, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Vladimir Kornilov, and Yuri Trifonov have begun to appear in the West, often ably translated and handsomely produced by prestigious publishing houses. This diverse and ever-growing body of literature, some of it by authors now part of the large émigré community, offers us a more comprehensive view of the state of culture and creative life in the Soviet Union than has been available to Westerners since the early 60's.

The Soviet writers I will be discussing here, of whom only Vassily Aksyonov and Yevgeny Yevtushenko are at all familiar to Western readers, are no blushing ingenues. Yuri Trifonov was born in 1925, Yevtushenko in 1933, the rest in between those two dates. They are the sons of revolutionaries, members of a generation which had already started families and careers at the time of Stalin's death in 1953. Moreover, they have long enjoyed considerable recognition and stature in their own country: in reputation, they are the Saul Bellows, the Graham Greenes, the Guenter Grasses of the Soviet Union.

Yet like all public figures in the Soviet Union, these writers have been forced continually to make choices almost unimaginable to their American or European counterparts. Most inhabit the constantly shifting area between saint and party stooge. All have enjoyed official approbation, at least for a book or two. As a consequence of both internal and external pressures, their careers have zigzagged from compliance, to silence, to acts of resistance or emigration, to returns to a beleaguered safety.*

Because of the hazards of a literary life in the Soviet Union, most of the novels now being issued in translation were written "for the desk-drawer" —manuscripts which were circulated by hand and devoured in secret, later to be smuggled abroad and published by émigré houses in Frankfurt or Paris; there is consequently often a ten- or fifteen-year delay between composition and publication abroad. This delay is made more insidious by the internal time lag from which those behind the Iron Curtain suffer. Communism, of necessity, keeps its citizens in cultural quarantine from the West. Western goods and ideas are slow to seep through. While some novelists have been content to produce national epics of an untainted purity, looking back to the 19th century for inspiration, others have strained to reproduce the faint and long-delayed echoes that come to them from the West. Victims of changing literary fashions, they are sometimes caught with their bell-bottoms down.

Take *The Burn*, by Vassily Aksyonov, one of the most highly acclaimed novels of recent years. Though published in English in 1984, *The Burn* was finished in 1975 and was itself a response to the counterculture of the 1960's as it reached Aksyonov in Moscow. The novel thus has the stale and slightly tinny flavor of a recently discovered book by Richard Brautigan or Ken Kesey. It comes to us not only from a long way away, but also from a long time ago.

The authors I will be considering could be said to fall roughly into three categories. First, there are the Communists-with-a-bad-conscience, loyal subjects and approved authors who, late in life, have come to take upon themselves a measure of responsibility for the monster which the revolution spawned, and whose works subtly reflect some of the brutalization of feeling and erosion of principle which Communism has induced in daily life. Of this group of novelists, who only found their voices after Stalin's death, and of whom Ilya Ehrenburg was the best-known in his time, Yuri Trifonov is a late but preeminent example.

Secondly, there are the hedonists, the "children of the Thaw," members of that group of lyric poets, musicians, actors, and short-story writers who during the brief period of liberalization under Khrushchev in the early 1960's became national idols, reading their poetry to packed and weeping sports stadiums, selling 100,000 copies of their books in advance orders alone, who were

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* The transformations that can take place in the life of one man are well recounted by Vladimir Voinovich in *Samizdat Bulletin*, No. 134, June 1984. Voinovich's own *Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977) is one of this century's great comic novels.

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feted by the authorities, sent abroad on delicious international junkets, and—by 1963—forced to recant or starve. Of these Komsomol hippies, proponents of free love with a socialist face, Vassily Aksyonov and Yevgeny Yevtushenko are the flourishing survivors.

Finally, there is the rank of the heroes, of whom Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is justly the most famous: resolute individualists distinguished for the constancy and clear-sightedness of their defense of truth and liberty, spokesmen for those social and spiritual continuities which alone keep a civilization in good health. For the most part Russian Orthodox believers (though sometimes of Jewish origin), they are anti-Communist but equally scornful of the West for what they regard as its misplaced faith in material progress, its moral degeneration, and its consequent loss of the will to resist the encroachments of totalitarianism. Of this body of resisters, Vladimir Maximov and Vladimir Kornilov, both now living in Paris, are clear representatives.

II

PERHAPS because so little of "official" literature is translated in the West, Yuri Trifonov comes to us as something of an anomaly. Born in Moscow in 1925, the son of a Red Army commander in the civil war of 1918-21 who was executed in 1937 and expunged from party history, Trifonov seems in certain ways a throwback to an earlier era in the history of Soviet letters. His elegant, careful, and on the surface almost impassive novellas depicting contemporary urban life recall the work of writers like Ehrenburg and Leonid Leonov, who continued to produce and to publish even during the worst years of Stalinism but who managed to incorporate into the most correct monuments of socialist realism a suggestion of some of the truths of Soviet reality. It is this kind of layered, ambiguous fiction which the late Max Hayward called "the noblest type of collaboration."

Looking back at Trifonov's entire career (he died in 1981), one can detect an almost linear progress: an early novel, *Students* (1951), which won the Stalin Prize (and probably deserved it); another, *Thirst*, about the construction of a canal at Kara-Kum; a decade of near-silence spent in the State Archives, reconstructing the civil-war years in an effort to rehabilitate his father's name, the result of which was *The Campfire Reflection* (1964); then, throughout the 70's, "noble collaborations" in the form of novellas that are fresh, exquisite, memorable, but deliberately empty of hope or spiritual meaning; and, finally, his masterpiece, *The Old Man*. (A last novel, *Time and Place*, about a writer constrained by political circumstances from fulfilling his potential, remains unpublished in the Soviet Union.)

Of all the Soviet literary works available in translation today, Trifonov's novellas of the 1970's, collected in *The Long Goodbye** and *Another Life/The House on the Embankment*,† are the most accessible, if only because their themes—domestic grievances, dissatisfaction at work, past infidelities recollected, all the compromises, grudges, and resentments of an unheroic middle age—are so dear to current taste. Indeed, these tales of urban disappointment and betrayal, delivered in a spare, delicately scented prose, are not only accessible, they must seem uncannily familiar to any reader of modern American fiction. No wonder they have elicited raves from American reviewers: Richard Lourie in the New York *Times Book Review* called Trifonov a Soviet Chekhov, and John Updike in the *New Yorker* praised him for honesty, sensitivity, and (again) Chekhovian tenderness in describing "life in our recessive fellow-superpower's territory." (Reviewers' frames of reference in describing Soviet literature tend to be limited: if a writer isn't a Soviet Chekhov then he's a Soviet Turgenev, if not a Soviet Turgenev then a Soviet Dostoevsky, if not a Soviet Dostoevsky then a Soviet Tolstoy—or sometimes, as with the lucky Vassily Aksyonov, all of the above.)

Trifonov's fictional world is highly localized. It is a world of middle-aged Moscow professionals—academics, engineers, biologists, but more often employees at nameless institutes whose careers have been chiseled out of compromises and betrayals, men who are more absorbed by the task of finding a co-worker from whom they can cadge a loan or leaving the office early to visit a sick mother than they are by their work. The field of action is similarly constricted, the emotions muffled. These heroes of our time get caught in traffic jams or have trouble finding a cab, their wives nag them about getting their son into an elite school, they are snubbed in the street by a more successful colleague, they wonder whether they should buy a new mattress this year or next, they remember that the pipes in their summer home need fixing. Because the present is so gray and inadequate, much of the significant action here takes place in memory. In "The Exchange," an act of submission to greed compels the protagonist to think back on his life to discover at what point he alienated himself from his own family and joined forces with his grasping wife and in-laws; in "Taking Stock," a failed translator with a weak heart broods in a cultural-workers' resort over all the shabby betrayals in which he has acquiesced. Yet memory brings neither understanding nor resolution, only waves of self-pity.

The dangers inherent in these subjects are apparent. To read story after story about men dissatisfied with their dreary and compromised lives, about nebbish husbands whose wives made them do it, can become debilitating if there is no re-

* Translated by Helen P. Burlingame and Ellendea Proffer, Ardis/Harper & Row, 1978.

† Translated by Michael Glenny, Simon & Schuster (1983), 350 pp., $16.95.

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sponsibility taken for actions, no effort to transcend circumstances, no higher authority invoked than self-interest, no knowledge gained from the exercise of memory. But Trifonov's own compassion for his characters is what saves these stories from such debility. Like a mother seeing her small child off to school, Trifonov lovingly pats his beleaguered academics' yellow briefcases and straightens their frayed ties, dabs black-market perfume behind their wives' pendulous ears, and sends them all off into the mean and meager world of his own making.

Moreover, despite the sense of emptiness that accompanies his heroes and heroines, Trifonov's novels are much more tightly peopled than one is used to in modern fiction. Not only parents and children, but also mothers- and fathers-in-law, aunts by marriage, cousins, and cousins-in-law live under the same roof, while neighbors, coworkers, ex-wives, and friends' widows clamor for attention.

The reader cannot but find himself engaged, too, by the jewel-like quality of Trifonov's writing: his delicate prose, his eye for choice detail, his intimate feel for light, location, change of season, weather, for physical appearance, sights observed from a train (the changing countryside around Moscow and the encroachments of urban blight are favorite themes, and well-suited to Trifonov's genteelly frayed, elegiac moods).

If it is above all for these almost peripheral rewards that his novellas of the 1970's are worth reading, nevertheless one feels that in them Trifonov is doing his talents an injustice. To judge from the heights he reached in *The Old Man*,* the last novel to be published before his death, one might suppose that the failure of these novellas—which is a failure of daring—came from Trifonov's unwillingness to address directly their hidden subject: the nature of the political system which circumscribes these ordinary souls. In the novellas, it is as if Trifonov's characters were moving about under a tent; in *The Old Man* the tarpaulin is lifted, and one sees at last the black skies of socialism.

The Old Man is the story of an Old Bolshevik coming to terms with his life's service to a monstrous cause. The book is set during the terrible drought of the summer of 1973 in Sokoliny Bor, a summer community where Pavel Evgrafovich lives in a dark wooden dacha crammed with his bickering children and their husbands and wives —each regarded by the old man with vivid spite and bursts of idiosyncratic sympathy. While Pavel Evgrafovich's children drink tea and argue about Ivan the Terrible, the old man slips from a present soured by longing for his dead wife and worry at the wreck the younger generation has made of their lives, into an obsessive quest into the past.

Like the author himself, Pavel Evgrafovich has spent his life ransacking state archives, collecting files in order to rehabilitate the name of a civil war commander later executed for counterrevolutionary conspiracy. Much of *The Old Man* centers on certain events in the career of this fictional commander, a Cossack leader named S.K. Migulin, who was married to Pavel Evgrafovich's childhood love. In 1919, at the height of the civil war, Migulin had been put in charge of a Special Corps in the Don region, where Pavel Evgrafovich also happened to be stationed as a young commissar. As punishment for suspected ideological deviations, Migulin was kept out of combat. Unable to bear the disgrace of inaction, he disobeyed orders and led his men to the front to smash Denikin, a legendary White leader who was taking the Don by storm. The question tormenting Pavel Evgrafovich is: why did Migulin lead that march in August 1919?

> After a long life and endless dissection, here I am now, an old man—"an old piece of garbage," as Vera once said when angry not with her father but with another old man who had done her a bad turn—on a hot night in Sokoliny Bor, when life is over. I require nothing; sleeping pills do not help—anyway, what's the point? The sleep which no one can escape is near. So answer this: why did he do it?

The real question concerns not the motives behind the march but the nature of cowardice and conscience in a time of terror. Why did Migulin act out of bravery, principle, and love of his people while throughout his life Pavel Evgrafovich, a proud and upright man, remained the discreet servant of a murderous dictatorship? (That Pavel Evgrafovich testified against Migulin in his final trial for conspiracy is hinted at throughout the book, and only openly confirmed on the last page.) If Trifonov suggests an answer to this question, it is this: that people do what they must, and are guided more in their actions by personal character than by the remorseless forces of history which Pavel Evgrafovich persists in seeing as the final determinant of great events.

In *The Old Man*, Trifonov's consummate virtues—his feel for character and especially for families, his eye for nature, his ear for idiosyncratic speech patterns—are brought to fruition in conjunction with the largeness of theme his abilities deserve. The book starts cold and gradually heats up. At first, Pavel Evgrafovich's crabbiness as an observer of present-day events, the abbreviated note form of his recollections, and his jumbling of time and place serve to exclude the reader, especially one unacquainted with the ins and outs of the civil war. As the narration proceeds, however, both past and present gain fullness and resonance, and the reader is drawn right to the heart of this story of thunderous events—of mutiny, massacres, battlefronts, sacked cities, military tribunals, and heroic men and women. Even Migulin—an autodidact of narrow intellect but immense principle,

* Translated by Jacqueline Edwards and Mitchell Scheider, Simon & Schuster, 267 pp., $16.95.

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an opponent of Trotsky's draconian Cossack policies, an old soldier besotted with his young wife but unable to endure a life out of action—becomes both real and dear to us.

In this tale the reader may be surprised to find the role played by pity as an agent of redemption —surprised, since we are accustomed to thinking of this emotion as lying somewhere between condescension and contempt. Yet even Pavel Evgrafovich himself, a cantankerous old man in search of the truth, achieves at the last a transcendent pity for the people he has known, and thus a new humanity. This attachment to pity is a quality Trifonov shares with other Soviet writers, many of them of Jewish origin but Christian faith, who remind their readers again and again, as they describe the most cataclysmic events, that of Christianity's basic tenets, love of neighbor comes first, and that it is only through pity for his fellow-creatures that Soviet man, as Vladimir Maximov has said, can "press the slave out of himself." Trifonov, to my knowledge, was neither Christian nor Jew, but that he should have come at the end of his life to express so clearly this traditional religious value seems in keeping with his final confrontation with Soviet history.

III

To move from Yuri Trifonov to Vassily Aksyonov is quite a fall from seriousness. Aksyonov's position as a Soviet writer has been a very privileged one, analogous only to Yevgeny Yevtushenko's (of whom more below). Until his emigration to the West in 1980, Aksyonov served as an official rebel of the regime, one who even at the worst of times got to go to film festivals in Buenos Aires and to accept lectureships in the United States. Long a hero of the young and a figure of international renown, Aksyonov has cultivated a Mailer-like persona (though he himself thinks of it as Hemingway-like). His nakedly self-celebratory writings portray the author as soccer player, saxophonist, womanizer, souse, flower child, friend of the famous, and film director.

His career has, indeed, been a varied one. Born in Kazan in 1932, he is the son of a revolutionary and professional party man and of Evgenia Ginzberg, whose *Journey Into the Whirlwind* and *Within the Whirlwind* are foremost among the literature of Soviet prison camps. Aksyonov graduated from the Leningrad Medical Institute in 1956, but left medicine in 1960 to write full time. Within a couple of years he was named—with Yevtushenko—co-editor of the magazine *Youth*, and had gained international fame as the leading spokesman of a literary movement whose great subject was young people trying to find meaning in an anti-youth world.

It must have been an intoxicating time to be a Soviet intellectual. Apart from the repressive spell that followed the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, Khrushchev's early years had seen the flowering of what promised to be a Soviet renaissance: a time of cultural experimentation and free inquiry. Aksyonov was one of the chief beneficiaries of this momentary thaw, during which poets, musicians, and story-writers were accorded the kind of national idolatry reserved for rock stars in the West, and it seemed as if it would soon be possible to say anything.

Then in March 1963 a group of Moscow's leading intellectuals were called to the Kremlin, where they were told by Khrushchev that the good times were over: there would be no more cushy editorships and foreign travel for anyone who kept on vilifying the party abroad and in his work. Of those under attack, most remained silent or stood firm. The poet Andrei Voznesensky published a highly ambiguous poem in praise of Lenin; only Yevtushenko and Aksyonov produced classic recantations. Aksyonov, in *Pravda* (April 3, 1963), declared himself to have been lax in fighting Western imperialism and promised to create a "positive hero" (Soviet jargon for socialist realism) "with a concept in mind concentrating into one thought all the magnitude, optimism, and complexity of our Communist era." He was returned to favor, and spent much of the next two decades traveling abroad, including in 1975 a stint as visiting lecturer at that mecca of flower children, Berkeley, California.

During the late 60's and early 70's, Aksyonov turned from rather gritty and laconic tales of workers looking for something higher in life to increasingly surrealist fiction, delivered in a jumpy and intricately allusive style. In *Surplussed Barrelware*,* for example, a collection of short stories from the 60's and 70's which has just appeared in English, the translators provide more pages of footnotes than text in their effort to unravel the knot of literary echoes, puns, and allusions; despite their diligence, one would have to say that the style does not travel well. The most successful stories in this mode appear in an earlier volume, *The Steel Bird*†; the title story (a play on Stalin's name) is a daring political satire in which a humanoid monster takes control of an apartment building, and in "A Poem of Ecstasy," inspired by Muhammad Ali, the hero wins his boxing matches by composing symphonic poetry in his head.

In 1980, a year after becoming one of the editors of *Metropol*, a literary almanac published aboveboard but free of censorship, Aksyonov emigrated to the United States, where he now lives in Washington, D.C. Since his arrival, he has published (in addition to his collection of old short stories) two "desk-drawer" novels: *The Island of Crimea*** and *The Burn*.†† And most recently he has writ-

* Edited and translated by Joel Wilkinson and Slava Yastremski, Ardis, 195 pp., $23.50.

† No translator named, Ardis, 1979.

** Translated by Michael Henry Heim, Random House, 359 pp., $16.95.

†† Translated by Michael Glenny, Random House, 528 pp., $18.95.

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ten two literary essays which make interesting companion-pieces.

The first of these essays, "Success and the Soviet Writer" (New York *Times Book Review*, March 10, 1985), is a complaint about the hardships of a writer's life in the Soviet Union today. Aksyonov informs his readers that although they might suppose (to judge by our own literary Croesuses) that a best-selling Moscow novelist makes buckets of money, in fact he himself was often obliged to take on translation work and children's books in order to support his family. One wonders what his late mother, a courageous woman gifted with the highest intellectual capacities, would think of these whinings, she who after ten years in Stalinist camps rejoiced while still in exile to be given the luxury of teaching music to kindergartners.

In this essay Aksyonov also manages to get in a dig at Andrei Voznesensky under the guise of commiserating with him for his capitulation to government pressure in the spring of 1963; he neglects to mention that of the new-wave "jet-setters" it was he himself who produced the fullest recantation. When the Soviet scholar S. Frederick Starr, in a letter to the *Times Book Review*, reminded Aksyonov of his own contribution to the literature of collaboration, Aksyonov recanted once again, replying that he had not mentioned his own lapse only because it was not the most "eloquent" example of the genre.

The second essay, "An Exile in Literary America" (New York *Times Magazine*, April 14, 1985), is a curious mixture of subservience, self-pity, and bile. Its ostensible subject is how American literary culture, no less than Soviet, has been reduced to pulp by its submission to external pressures. In the Soviet Union, it is the Communist party that calls the shots; here, the almighty dollar has banished avant-garde (and foreign) writers to a literary gulag of the unread, and raised up an elite of best-selling dimwits analogous to the *nomenklatura* of the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

Perhaps what will most forcibly strike a reader familiar with Aksyonov's reception in this country is the injustice of his complaints. Indeed, few novels of recent years have been greeted with such acclaim as has *The Burn*. Anatole Shub (in the New York *Times Book Review*) wrote that it "made Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* seem sentimental and much of Solzhenitsyn's fiction seem wooden in comparison," and that the novel "will be read and pondered, debated and studied for as long as literature has admirers and critics." In *Time*, Patricia Blake called *The Burn* "a masterwork of modern Russian literature," while in the *New Republic* the Czech novelist Josef Skvorecky hailed Aksyonov as "an epoch-making writer" whose "stunning inferno" of Stalinism recalls the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch.

The Burn is constructed in three rambling books. In the first, "The Men's Club," five identical protagonists (a sculptor, a scientist, a doctor, a jazz saxophonist, and a writer) wander through a Russian hell, accompanied by their French White Russian mistress Masha, a decaying professional hockey player, and Patrick Thunderjet, an Anglo-American professor and sodden nihilist. The book veers from the scientist's peremptory deflowering of a lab assistant he has never seen before, to the sculptor's pick-up of some KGB whores in a foreign-currency bar, to a reception at a Brazilian embassy where the writer announces to the company his lust for an unknown Moscow prostitute, to recollections of a clash with fascist mercenaries in Africa in which Masha was raped and enjoyed it, to a brawl at a lower-class Moscow beer stand; it finally ends up with the five identical heroes united in a Yalta sobering-up station. This trick of peopling a 500-page novel with five identical men makes for a certain monotony, especially as (in the spirit of the avant-garde) Aksyonov repeats the same event five times over, merely switching proper names and pronouns.

The next and most successful book, "Five in Solitary," contains the heroes' reminiscences of their common progenitor, Tolya von Steinbock, a teenager living in Magadan (the capital of the Far Eastern death camps) with his ex-prisoner mother and her second husband, a German Catholic homeopath. In this section, we are introduced to the community of political prisoners, to the prison administration aristocracy, and to the collective heroes' nemesis, a prison guard named Chepstov.

The last book, "The Victim's Last Adventures," is an increasingly disjointed excursion into surrealism with appearances by a marble dinosaur, a toy soldier of a White general (father of Masha, the one assaulted by mercenaries in Africa), and a magical ambulance. It skitters between encounters with Hemingway in Paris, Suffolk lawns, the wedding of Chepstov's stepdaughter to a swinish soldier who tells war stories about the invasion of Czechoslavakia in '68, and a scene on the moon where Chepstov has become a janitor in a Chinese museum, finally ending with a mystical hush hanging over the city of Moscow.

Despite Aksyonov's natural gifts as a writer, his energy, love of color, and gift of the gab, *The Burn* is made tedious by authorial self-indulgence. The book is clearly autobiographical. Aksyonov depicts here some fascinating scenes from his own life, including the two years spent among political prisoners in Magadan in the late 40's, his leading role in the cultural reawakening that swept the Soviet Union after Stalin's death, the subsequent crackdown on the arts that culminated in the trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel in 1966, and the invasion of Czechoslavakia and its profound effect on Soviet intellectuals. But instead of telling his story Aksyonov has chosen to compete with it, jamming reality with a blare of clumsy surrealism. Interspersing his narrative with free-verse odes to drunkenness and youth, or with inspirational stories about military exercises

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interrupted by barefoot middle-aged alcoholic hippies, he dresses up events in so antic—and, to a foreigner, impenetrably allusive—a style that the ordinary reader will be lost, and the cognoscenti too busy catching puns and political references to enjoy the fluency. Reading a large dose of *The Burn* is like being locked up with a drunk on a talking jag.

Sex, alcohol, and drugs are three metaphors for the kinds of spurious freedoms in which *The Burn* revels, but as with another fashionable anarchist, the English novelist Martin Amis, it is Aksyonov's compulsion as a writer to degrade his subjects, to turn all that he touches to garbage. Thus the celebrants of freedom in *The Burn* are pathetic lechers or expensive whores without a soul; liquor is reduced to trembling withdrawals, maudlin ravings*; sex to masturbation, rape, and swagger. And *everything* is reduced to brand names, a favorite shortcut to effect in *The Burn*. A doctor at an operating table is summoned up thus: "He exuded the complete playboy's bouquet: a touch of Remy Martin brandy, a dash of Yardley's aftershave, and a whiff of Kent cigarettes. He also reeked of sperm and female excretions." It is only slightly unfair to suggest that if all the dirty words in *The Burn* were deleted, little more would be left than a heap of Ronson lighters, Johnny Walker Black Label bottles, Volkswagen cars, and Dior suits. That being deprived of luxury goods makes those who live under Communism only the hungrier for brand names is natural; that an inventory of a duty-free store makes for high literature is a notion peculiar to Aksyonov.

Despite its playfulness, then, *The Burn* is a lazy and joyless book which never creates a convincing world of its own, but remains an ugly pastiche of already stale literary fashions.

And of the author's ideas? *The Burn* is dominated by a curious mixture of attitudes: worship of progressive Western tastes and mores; distrust of Western political institutions; hedonism; mystical Christianity; and an anarchic individualism whose obverse side is contempt for the masses. Aksyonov's is a literature of reaction and complaint, and as such may be welcome to Westerners who mourn the passing of a "protest" movement. ("What is the meaning of rebellion and is there any meaning to it?" the saxophonist asks his teenage band. "Sounds to me like he's been hitting the bottle, guys!" is their response. "Have you, daddy-o? Or maybe you've been shooting up?") Yet for all his talk of rebellion, Aksyonov is no dissident. His flower children go to demonstrations, but these are demonstrations protesting U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The American Patrick Thunderjet calls his country a whore, a monstrous octopus, a bag of half-dead protoplasm, the American flag a "puke-covered bed-sheet." But the collective Russian hero, roué and cynic that he is, nevertheless remains a devout patriot.

Indeed, love of country is one of the more robust virtues espoused in this swamp of sentimental anarchy. Those criticisms of Soviet life the author does venture are so mild or flippant as to make the USSR sound like a larger Panama or South Korea, a benign dictatorship which still hasn't got the hang of free speech. "And what about democracy in the Soviet Union? What's the score on that, kiddo?" the narrator asks when his heroes get arrested for demonstrating outside the American embassy against U.S. "atrocities" in Vietnam. "I guess democracy's pretty fucked up here, daddyo," the author concludes, sadly.

In many ways, Vassily Aksyonov was a credit to his country, a loyal Soviet citizen willing to forgive much in exchange for public recognition, foreign travel, and the stimulation of an intensely fertile intellectual community. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union is a country which eats and then disgorges its most loving children; and so Aksyonov finds himself cooling his heels in Washington, D.C., getting paid to complain about American mass culture.

Wild Berries,† the first novel of another child of the Thaw, the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko, has many of the same flaws as *The Burn*: a reliance on cheap effects, a certain sentimental insincerity, and a crudeness of mind that mixes poorly with the author's taste for philosophizing. But *Wild Berries* is in many ways a more pleasurable read than *The Burn*.

The book is animated by Yevtushenko's love of nature, his appetite for life, and his relish of a good story. Based loosely on the account of a geological expedition in Siberia, it offers some of fiction's most abiding satisfactions: an adventure crammed with vividly stirring types (driven leaders, willing country beauties, soft-bellied traitors, saintly hunchbacks, proud but poor child-poets) and rich in gorgeous landscapes, tumbles in the hay, ready morals, and cautionary tales.

The book is also dominated, however, by Yevtushenko's avowed belief in the goodness of man left in nature, a belief which leads ineluctably to a celebration of Soviet Communism as the most natural of political systems, and to condemnations of America for its artificiality, corruption, and oppression of its own noble savages (the Indians and, in this case, the Hawaiians). The book's geopolitical vision thus invites a certain amazement, and inevitably calls into question the sincerity of its otherwise delicious bag of fictional goods.

Wild Berries has been slammed by American reviewers, in some cases precisely for those qualities for which *The Burn* was praised. What in Aksyonov is regarded as phantasmagorical, in Yevtushenko becomes far-fetched; what in Aksyonov is avant-garde and experimental, in Yevtushenko is

* The best recent novel about the role of drunkenness in Soviet life is a sweet and mystifying confession, *Moscow to the End of the Line*, by Venedikt Erofeev (Taplinger, 1980).

† Translated by Antonina W. Bouis, Morrow, 296 pp., $15.95.

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merely repetitious. Part of this discrepancy can be attributed to a literary bias in favor of the difficult: Aksyonov's work is a web of literary allusions, Yevtushenko's is effortlessly easy on the reader. Part, too, can be attributed to Yevtushenko's reputation in the West as something of a time-server, a court poet whose occasional criticisms of the regime only make it look better. (In *Wild Berries*, Stalin's elimination of the kulaks, an act of class extermination which resulted in millions dead, is illustrated fictionally by the relocation of a family of rich peasants, except that the relocation, Yevtushenko-style, involves merely switching houses with another family of rich peasants.)

Yevtushenko's career has been admirably durable; his first poems were published in 1949, when their author was sixteen. It has also been wildly uneven. Poems of great lyric fervor and acts of intellectual courage like his early 60's denunciations of anti-Semitism have been outweighed by doggerel in praise of hydroelectric stations and the Red Army dead. But the count on this clever nationalist is not in yet: he may continue to squander his talents feeding, in Aksyonov's phrase, "the Soviet ideological hippopotamus," or he may yet redeem them by a genuine act of memory and self-knowledge.

IV

THROUGHOUT a long career, Vladimir Kornilov has succeeded in getting only one novella published in the Soviet Union. He is nonetheless a figure of national renown—a member of Amnesty International's Moscow group, the signer of numerous protests and human-rights declarations, and (until his emigration) one of the few dozen people in the Soviet Union who might genuinely be called dissidents.

Building a Prison, his first work to appear in English,* is the story of an old man totting up his life's account while his children prepare for emigration to America. Pashet Cholyshev is what his family describes as an "internal émigré," a man who all his life has "steered clear of imposed opinions as though they could fall on him like bricks from a scaffold and smash his skull," and whose rejection of political reality has condemned him to a life of fussy inaction and premature old age. The book, which is told in flashbacks, in excerpts from memoirs, and in imaginary conversations, centers on one of the most searching questions of Soviet life: the issue of collaboration. Is there such a thing as honest abstention from public life in a time of tyranny? Or has Pashet, by his withdrawal from political reality, become a stonemason, building the prison of the Soviet state? Has his son-in-law Grisha, a baptized Jew, and all the other Jews who deny their fathers and seek to become more Russian than the Russians, collaborated in the anti-Semitism which Kornilov shows to be prevalent even among Soviet intellectuals?

Building a Prison is the clear, delicate, and provocative novel of an original thinker. Although far less substantial a writer than Trifonov, Kornilov nonetheless manages to convey with even greater poignance the erosion of self-worth and the steady hemorrhaging of the soul that are among the accumulated costs of living under a political lie.

WHERE Vladimir Kornilov shows how people are tainted and corrupted by life under totalitarianism, another opponent of the regime, Vladimir Maximov, shows how men can rise above the most constricting circumstances. Maximov seems to be in some respects self-created. He was born in 1932, the son of a Jewish party member who was imprisoned in the 30's for Trotskyite connections. Maximov ran away from home at the age of twelve, beginning a cross-country pilgrimage through the Soviet underworld of reform schools, labor camps, thieves' kitchens, and mental hospitals which serves in several of his novels as a kind of allegory of man's larger spiritual quest.

Maximov came into some renown in 1962 with the publication of his first novel, *A Man Survives*. This book, the story of a young rebel on the run, was published in New York the following year by Grove Press, presumably in the hope that Maximov would prove a kind of Soviet Jean Genet. No such luck. Within a matter of months Maximov with his stubborn nonconformity had managed to alienate himself from even the liberal and well-intentioned pockets of the Moscow literary world. During the next fifteen years, he wrote three more novels, all published abroad by émigré houses, and a slew of protests against totalitarianism and its apologists, even going so far afield in his search for a good fight as to write an open letter to Willy Brandt accusing the then-Chancellor of West Germany of creating a second Munich through his pursuit of *Ostpolitik*. In 1975, in the same week that Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union, Maximov was issued a passport and exit visa and emigrated to Paris, where he founded the émigré journal *Kontinent* and became director of Resistance International (which among other activities now broadcasts to the Afghan rebels).

Vladimir Maximov is the child of what is perhaps the purest and most clear-sighted tradition in Russian thought: that 19th-century school of religious philosophy sparked off by Peter Chaadayev, an officer and petty nobleman who was declared officially insane for his *Lettres Philosophiques* (1829-31), in which he declared that among all the major nations of the world, Russia alone "contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit; we have disfigured it. . . . While the world entirely rebuilt itself, we built nothing; we stayed in our thatched hovels." Chaadayev at-

* Translated by Edward Dale, Quartet, 188 pp., $14.95.

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tributed Russia's lack of a humanist tradition to its isolation from the civilizing influences of Western Christianity, an isolation whose underside, he recognized, was expansionism ("In order to be noticed, we had to expand from the Bering Straits to the Oder").

Chaadayev was a freak in his own time, but his precepts were later brought to fruition by an early opponent of Bolshevism, the ex-Marxist religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, who had been critical of the Old Regime's contempt for law and individual liberties but who recognized the archaic and retrogressive nature of the political system that was replacing it. Berdyaev as early as 1937 described (in his *Origins of Russian Communism*) how the Soviet state, whose practices he brands a Russian form of fascism, had not only institutionalized and brought to perfection all that was most monstrous in the Russia of the czars, but had combined this with a messianic mission of world domination.

Vladimir Maximov is the direct heir of this Russian brand of Christian humanism, and an artist of the very first rank. His novelistic gifts include an ear for natural and slangy speech, the ability to distill a man's life and character into a few lines, an instinct for lodging his stories in locations of enduring human interest, a wry and gamy wit, and a force of narrative momentum which compels the reader to keep turning pages. With these dramatic strengths come the mental breadth of a moral philosopher and a poetical clarity of perception.

MAXIMOV's uneven masterpiece is *Farewell from Nowhere.** It is the story of a young delinquent's pilgrimage across the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and his transformation from a swell-headed tough to humble servant of God. *Farewell from Nowhere* is written in a powerfully elegiac voice—the voice of an exile from his own times who is looking back through what Henry James called "the golden glaze of time" at the many lives and places he has crossed in his journey, a journey which Maximov compares to the Israelites' forty years in the wilderness. More even than a story of redemption, the novel is a work of thanksgiving, in which the author, retracing his steps, stops at each station to recompense the gratuitous kindnesses of thieves, janitors, railwaymen, and nurses, by telling their stories.

Maximov's work is in general jammed with such chance encounters and life stories told in prison bunks and around bonfires, with each companion so distinctly perceived and so fully inhabited that we feel we can see the backs of his ears and the soles of his feet, and know what he thinks about before he falls asleep. Maximov writes with an unfaltering sense of what it means to be a particular man or woman; the full force of birthplace, upbringing, work, family, political and religious conviction, and moral character seems to impress itself indelibly on each person's words and deeds. And in addition to this tender respect for human life is a larger sense of social structure, an understanding of what constitutes and sustains a community. In *Seven Days of Creation,* a novel published in English in 1975 (Knopf), Maximov calls forth the entire provincial railway town of Uzlovaya, chronicling its rises and falls, its responses to war, famine, and prosperity, the social and professional and religious groups within it, and the conflicts which dominate each family and each grouping.

Maximov is a great lover of the ordinary and the natural. His books are inhabited by independent minds, original thinkers who have retreated from the unnaturalness of life under Communism into an older world of religious observance and traditional customs. By means of this act of withdrawal Maximov is himself able to appeal to what is common to all humanity, and as a consequence his writing has a curiously serene and timeless quality, as if he were a man witnessing his own times from above. In *Seven Days of Creation,* a stationmaster's arrest for sabotage suddenly offers an occasion for transcendent comment on an age of terror when the accused man, prodded by the provincial commissar to deliver his "confession" of how he caused two trains to crash, "merely frowned, lowered his eyes, and retorted without thinking, 'Slave.' Then he added, with rising assurance and contempt, 'Slaves, all of you.'" When at the end of his life the commissar's eyes are opened, reluctantly, to God, and to the falsity of the cause he has served, it is through the services of this self-same "saboteur," whose execution he thought he had ordered forty years earlier. This overriding sense of individual worth, combined with a consciousness of ultimate judgments which seem almost to dwarf history, is what distinguishes *Seven Days of Creation* from Trifonov's *The Old Man,* another book about the moral awakening of an old commissar. Whereas Trifonov's hero remains a buoy batted about by the inexorable waves of history, Maximov's work is infused with a feeling of artistic and religious unity, of a larger purpose ordering events.

Ark for the Uncalled,† Maximov's latest novel, is one of the few émigré works published in the last few years actually to have been written after its author's arrival in the West. The book is about two young men from the same central Russian village, each on his way after World War II to begin a new life in the Kurile Islands, whose settlement Stalin is encouraging as insurance against the Japanese. Fyodor is an "eagle," a just and compassionate young peasant who after courageous service at the front is taking his parents and grandmother out to this

* Translated by Michael Glenny, Doubleday, 1979.
† Translated by Julian Graffy, Quartet, 218 pp., $14.95.

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new frontier to make a fortune. Zolotarev, whose childhood poverty had made him the laughingstock of the town, is now a driven young commissar; at Stalin's recommendation, he has just been appointed administrator of the Kuriles. Both of these men's lives are transformed by their experiences of inhumanity. Zolotarev is haunted and at last driven to death by his first act of political service, the infiltration and arrest of a religious commune of railway construction workers. Fyodor, shaken by accumulated injustices and brutality, voices in disgusted wonder an idea that recurs throughout Maximov's work: "We crush each other, then we change places and start all over again."

Ark for the Uncalled has something of the feeling common to Thomas Hardy's novels: a sense of nature (here, the volcanic mountains of the Kuriles) serving as the instrument of a dark and implacable fate, against whose will man is helpless. This sense of helplessness is something new to Maximov's work. In his earlier novels, one felt no less surely than God's presence that "a man's a proud thing to be, brother, until your nose drops off" *(Farewell from Nowhere),* and that even a prisoner in a mental ward can assert his freedom through faith and acts of charity to his fellow-inmates. This latest novel, unfortunately, is insufficiently fleshed out to bear its weight of doom. Although it has some of the swells of humanity and telling vignettes that characterize Maximov's best work, *Ark for the Uncalled* is a hurried novel which does not give its characters and plot time and space enough to blossom.

We have yet to see the full effects of life in the West on this peculiarly Russian genius. But Vladimir Maximov is something rare in any age, a novelist gifted with a profoundly poetical quality of expression who is by temperament a moral theologian. His work is dominated by the great questions of our time: man's capacity for cruelty and self-deception, his lust for power and fear of freedom, his almost miraculous accesses of mercy and lovingkindness. Maximov has witnessed the reign of evil which Dostoevsky predicted would be brought by utopianism and atheistic nihilism. His novels are thus particularly severe on those intellectuals in the West who have ignored the lessons of what atrocities can be delivered in the name of progress. Yet beyond Maximov's political warnings lies a larger artistic purpose, which is to magnify God's name by praising all creation. Of all this century's literary responses to disaster, this is a most rare and welcome one.

V

IF THERE is an aesthetic quality common to these works by contemporary Soviet novelists, it is a deep-rooted conservatism. This is true even of so playful and venturesome a novelist as Aksyonov, who in his efforts at formal experimentation apes the Beat generation, and in his mystical surrealism looks even farther back to symbolists like Blok and Esenin. As for the finest of these writers—Trifonov, Maximov, Kornilov—rather than searching out new directions, they have instead quite consciously set about restoring literature to some of its oldest tasks.

Along with this artistic conservatism goes a traditionalism of another sort. In a 1981 essay Maximov accounts for this latter quality:

> When the Bolsheviks seized power, they made a historically fatal mistake: they permitted us the classics, . . . and as each of us came into contact with the great creations of human culture, we unwittingly absorbed their social criticism like a dry sponge. The healing moisture and air of this culture slowly restored in our hearts and souls the almost lost spiritual memory, the firm principles of Genesis, and the image and likeness of God.

The writers I have been considering are each very different and not all of them share Maximov's religious bent. But what they hold in common with him is their determination to remember, and to tell the truth; hence their decision to address themselves to the events of Russia's recent past, to look back at the carnage and perversions of justice on which the Soviet state was founded and to encompass them with that most enduring of human faculties, the artistic imagination. Trifonov's and Maximov's best works are about Old Bolsheviks reconstructing their experiences and coming to recognize their responsibility for the "prison" they have built; Kornilov focuses on the role played even by those who shunned an active life in the founding of Communism; at the heart of Aksyonov's *The Burn,* too, is the author's attempt to recreate his early encounter with Stalinism.

"It feels like it has been winter all my life," observes the hero of Kornilov's *Building a Prison.* "There is no need to hurry anywhere in winter: winter is a time of self-knowledge." These novels, for all their keenness of attack, also seem to come to us from a deep winter of self-knowledge, as well as from an almost selfless determination to preserve, in Vladimir Maximov's phrase, "man's continuity, cultural heritage, and historical memory."

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Operation Moses

Edward Alexander

"I REJOICE: there are white Jews too!" This exclamation came from the mouth of one of the newly arrived Jews from Ethiopia in his first day at Israel's national absorption center for his people in the seaside town of Ashkelon. However ironic the remark may have seemed to those who read it in Israel's newspapers on January 4 of this year, it had not a trace of intended irony in it, for this man, like nearly all of his ancestors and a large majority of his contemporaries, believed that the Beta-Yisrael, called by their Ethiopian countrymen Falashas (the pejorative Amharic word for stranger), were the only Jews in the world. His exclamation of joy was followed by one of apprehension over the way he and the thousands of his brothers and sisters just rescued from Ethiopia's chaos and famine would be treated by their exotic white co-religionists: "I am fearful about how they will receive us."

If this new immigrant had been speaking exclusively on the basis of what he might have heard about his people's past relations with white Jews, his fears would have been justified. By the 19th century, when the Beta-Yisrael had already been reduced, by mass executions and enslavement, from a powerful tribe of one million to a vulnerable remnant of 200,000, they had become a special target of Christian warfare, in the form of Protestant missionary invasions supported by the emperor of Ethiopia. Typically the missionaries would be converted Jews who represented themselves to the Beta-Yisrael as "white Falashas." Probably the most intrepid of these was Henry Stern, a German-Jewish convert who had himself been ordained by the Prussian-Jewish apostate Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, Michael Solomon Alexander. His evangelizing bore unintended fruit in 1862 when the Ethiopian Jews fled en masse from the missionaries in what they supposed to be the direction of Jerusalem. This attempt to reenact the story of the Exodus led to disaster, with many dying of hunger and malaria. Thus it is not by accident that the Beta-Yisrael celebrate Passover with unique immediacy and with special understanding of the biblical injunction to every Jew that he view the story of enslavement and rescue as his own.

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European Jewry became aware of the Beta-Yisrael only as a result of the publicity attaching to the efforts of the Church Militant in Ethiopia. In 1868 Joseph Halévy, a Turkish-born French-Jewish linguist, was sent by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* to assess the situation of the Beta-Yisrael. He made the unhappy mistake of introducing himself, as the missionaries had done, as a "white Falasha," and got the deserved incredulous response. Skepticism and suspicion were allayed only when Halévy persuaded the Beta-Yisrael that the people Israel still lived and flourished outside of Ethiopia, that Jerusalem was a living reality for modern Jews, and that its Jewish inhabitants were indeed white.

Halévy was less successful in persuading his European sponsors that the Ethiopian Falashas were a living Jewish reality, and that they needed and deserved help. Although he brought back with him an Ethiopian *siddur* written in Ge'ez (ancient Ethiopic) and two young Ethiopian Jews as living witnesses, the *Alliance* refused to publish his report, "lost" his manuscript in its office files, and even alleged that the two youths he had brought with him were nothing more than slaves whom he had bought in the market of Massuah.

Halévy later succeeded in inspiring one of his students at the Sorbonne, the Orthodox Jew Jacques Faitlovitch (originally from Lodz), to devote his life to understanding, preserving, and rescuing the Beta-Yisrael and their distinctive Jewish culture.* Faitlovitch too had to struggle not only against Christian missionaries but against Jews, including some rabbis, who were only too pleased to turn the Falashas over to the evangelists. One such rabbi, Haim Nahum, sent by the *Alliance* to check Faitlovitch's claims, insisted that the Beta-Yisrael were not "of Jewish blood," were "happy" where they were, and were unequal to the refine-

* The origins of the Beta-Yisrael have been a matter of scholarly dispute. Yitzhak Ben Zvi, in *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (1963), enumerates three theories. One traces their ancestry to King Solomon's men who brought the Queen of Sheba back from Jerusalem and then settled in Ethiopia; a second claims they were direct descendants of the Jewish mercenaries of Yeb (Elephantine) and Sweneh (Assouan), who migrated south and settled in Ethiopia; a third holds that they were the direct descendants of Arabian Jews who came to Ethiopia in the 6th century C.E. Ben-Zvi favors the second theory, of descent from the Jews of Upper Egypt.

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ments of modern Judaism. He also praised the Christian missionaries for their work.

From the vantage point of the Ethiopian Jews, it must have seemed that Rabbi Nahum found his continuators among leading politicians of Israel during the first three decades of the state's existence. But then the Ethiopian Jews were not and are not ideally situated to recognize that for a state like Israel there are such things as impossibilities in this world. Whether Labor party politicians viewed the Beta-Yisrael as immigrants who might prove uniquely difficult to absorb or feared that involvement on behalf of Ethiopian Jews would harm Israel's relations with Haile Selassie (whose name, it seems relevant to recall, means "Holy Trinity"), it is difficult to say. Whatever the reasons, many years passed without a single emissary being sent to this substantial community of Jews eager to come and in danger of physical extinction.

In his book on *The Lost Jews*,* Louis Rapoport singles out for blame a number of architects of Israel's African-assistance program. Golda Meir, for example, was fond of likening the African experience—of oppression, discrimination, enslavement, and murder—to the Jewish historical experience. But her attachment to the metaphorical Jews of Africa often seemed to be matched by her caution about involvement in the fate of the real ones, whom she never mentioned publicly. One of her party colleagues, the late Yisrael Yeshayahu, former speaker of the Knesset, returned from his visit to Ethiopia convinced that the best solution for the Ethiopian Jews was—to become Christians. This would make the Ethiopian government "happy" and would entitle the Beta-Yisrael to an autonomous region.

Until the election of Menachem Begin as Prime Minister in 1977, there were only about 200 Ethiopian Jews in Israel, and no government minister had ever consented to meet with a representative of the group. Begin, fortified both by personal conviction and by the 1975 ruling of Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef that the Beta-Yisrael were indeed Jews, members of the lost tribe of Dan, reversed the policy of his predecessors and initiated an active program to help and to bring them to Zion. But in February 1978 Moshe Dayan (whether inadvertently or by design) destroyed the immigration program by telling the press that Israel was supplying arms to Ethiopia. In 1980 Begin intensified what came to be called Operation Moses as the civil war in Ethiopia began to take a heavy toll of lives in the northern provinces of Gondar and Tygre where most of the Ethiopian Jews lived.

OFFICIAL secrecy about Israel's program to rescue thousands of Ethiopian Jews and bring them from famine-ravaged Ethiopia to the homeland obtained until January 2 of this year, when Yehuda Dominitz, Director-General of the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency, told a newspaper that "a majority" of the Ethiopian Jews were now in Israel. On January 3, the government reluctantly acknowledged that "more than 10,000" of the Beta-Yisrael had been brought to Israel during the last few years. (Other estimates are that 12,000 to 15,000 have come since 1980, and 6,000 of these in the last two months of 1984.) Although Israel's program of rescue had been an open secret in certain circles before January, and Arye Dulzin, Jewish Agency Executive Chairman, had all but revealed it in a statement to the press in early December, the American and Israeli press had in general showed rare and admirable self-restraint in withholding the story, and—as it turned out—for good reason. As soon as Dominitz and then Shimon Peres himself acknowledged the truth of the rumors, Operation Moses was stopped—by an embarrassed Sudanese government. (Dominitz was suspended from his duties in the Immigration Department.)

Up until January 5, the Ethiopian Jews had been going by foot to Sudanese refugee camps at Gedaref, just across the Ethiopian border, whence they were trucked to Khartoum, where they boarded planes to Brussels and then were flown to Israel. Although the Sudan denied any role in the operation, a spokesman for the Belgian charter airline that had ferried the Jews to Brussels announced that it was halting its participation in the airlift because of pressures coming from the Sudan. According to the Jewish Agency, the last planeload of immigrants arrived on January 5. At that date, at least 4,000 Jews were thought to remain in Sudanese camps, and several thousand more in Ethiopia itself.

The Ethiopian Jews knew that one-eighth to one-tenth of their community had already lost their lives on the trek to Israel. To this knowledge was now added the bitter news that thousands more of their relatives and friends would be stranded in the Sudan and Ethiopia. Anger was felt by many of the new immigrants toward officials and journalists. Eyewitnesses described one group in Ashkelon, when 120 reporters and photographers descended on their absorption center, fleeing to their rooms "as if from an approaching earthquake," leaving behind a spokesman who said: "Israel is making publicity for itself, but at whose expense? At ours."

Yet even among families torn asunder during Operation Moses, this was not the dominant reaction. For the Ethiopian Jews understood quickly that the "white Falashas" who had saved them from hunger and death had brought them not out of self-interest but out of brotherly love. Because the Ethiopians' knowledge of the land of Israel derives from the Bible rather than from the world press, they came expecting a land flowing with milk and honey—and their expectations have been

* Stein & Day, 1979. David Kessler's book, *The Falashas: The Forgotten Jews of Ethiopia* (Holmes & Meier, 1982), is a useful supplement to Rapoport.

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fulfilled. Upon them has been lavished the food so lacking in Ethiopia that Israeli doctors were shocked to see Ethiopian patients hiding slices of bread under their bed-sheets for fear that someone would steal it. They have also received in abundance the milk of kindness and the sweetness of fellowship. Rarely has there been such an outpouring of love and sympathy in Israel as has greeted these immigrants. They are immigrants, we must remember, the great majority of whom arrived not only with black skins but with bare feet, with bodies covered only in rags, emaciated, undernourished, and in many instances afflicted with diseases like typhus and malaria.

To outward view these immigrants looked more resistant to integration or "absorption" (the official term in Israel) than any of their predecessors since the founding of the state. Apart from the small number who came from urban, middle-class backgrounds, they would have to be taught to wear shoes, to use knives and forks and toilets, to take medicines, and to understand that electrical wires are not worms, that gas can be dangerous, and that you cannot remove food from grocery stores without giving money in exchange. Having been rescued from Ethiopia's Marxists and Christians and Muslims and famine, they would also have to be rescued from trauma. Virtually every report on the new immigrants has remarked on their preternatural silence, a silence that bespeaks the shock of people transplanted from one planet to another.

None of these obstacles has prevented the people of Israel from taking the Beta-Yisrael to their collective heart. Nearly everywhere in the country the reaction to these black immigrants has been: "Thou art bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, one God made us." Doctors and social workers and even Jewish Agency bureaucrats have been efficient, generous, and tactful in dealing with this largest wave of immigrants since the massive influx of Soviet Jews in the 1970's. Thus, a group of 200 parentless children, who a few days earlier had been without home, without hope, without help, arrives in Ashkelon, to be housed in a medical center that has been transformed into an absorption center. The menu for their first meal, which must take into account both their malnutrition and their unfamiliarity with "Western" food, is prescribed by doctors. Each child is looked after by workers from the department of *aliyah* (immigration) and *klitah* (absorption). An Amharic-speaking volunteer presides as social workers show the children by hand motions how to cut a potato and eat an egg. The children remain in Ashkelon for just two days, during which time they are washed, clothed, examined by doctors, and, depending on their condition, sent either to hospitals or to absorption centers all over the country.

Nearly everywhere there is good will and generosity toward the new immigrants. In Nahariya, for example, residents carry their used finery to the 600 Beta-Yisrael who have been lodged in local hotels, and soon the immigrants who arrived in rags stroll the street of this "*yekke*" (German-Jewish) resort town in a queer melange of Adidas and Pierre Cardin. At the Israel Broadcasting Authority, efforts are under way to start radio programs in Amharic. Calls for black dolls go out to the United States, and are promptly answered. Schools begin teaching Israeli children about the history and customs of Ethiopian Jews. Snow is brought in from Mt. Hermon for the amusement of children who have never seen any. Every wedding among the immigrants, every baby born to them, every diploma granted to one of their college graduates, is greeted by all Israel as a communal triumph.

It is worth remembering that the welcome accorded by the people of Israel to the Ethiopian Jews is not the universal practice of mankind with respect to distressed immigrants, and particularly penniless, starving black immigrants. It is, of course, true that from its inception one *raison d'être* of the state was to be a safe haven for Jews fleeing persecution. It is also true that Israel's very existence is predicated on continuing and increasing immigration. Nevertheless, a merely rational observer of Israeli life might well have predicted a very different and much icier reception for the Ethiopians at this particular point in the nation's history. Israel has been a country seared by war, a country that every night has turned with sick dread to the television screen to see the burials of soldiers, mostly very young, killed not in purposeful battle but in retreat from a conflict widely viewed as one of the greatest misfortunes since the founding of the state. It is a country beset by grave economic difficulties, including rampant inflation, severe shortage of housing for young couples, a ruined currency, and rapidly increasing unemployment. These are not as a rule the circumstances that conduce to the warm reception of thousands of destitute new immigrants, who will need not only Hebrew, but housing and jobs. At a time when all budgets, including the crucial one for defense, are being cut, the Israeli government has been spending hundreds of millions of unbudgeted dollars on the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants.

Why have the people of Israel, lately so often sermonized for their lack of ethical idealism, opened their hearts and their purses to the Jews of Ethiopia? Why, for example, does the Moroccan community of Jews in Israel, which has a history of bitterness over its own unsuccessful absorption in the early 1950's, which continues to claim that its members are discriminated against by Ashkenazi-dominated institutions, and which is now disproportionately harmed by spreading unemployment in development towns, go out of its way, at its annual Mimouna* festivities, to extend a spe-

* From Maimon, the North African sage who was the father of Maimonides.

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cial hand of welcome to the Ethiopian Jews and give them a central role in the official celebration in Jerusalem?

Part of the answer, to be sure, has to do with the intrinsic qualities of the immigrants themselves. Those who have worked with the Beta-Yisrael invariably speak with admiration of their gracious manners, filial devotion, and elementary decency. Teachers at the absorption centers have expressed amazement at a dedication and devotion "not of this world," have spoken of students of Hebrew at their desks half an hour before class in hopes the teacher will arrive early, and of children who are found poring over their books until midnight in dormitories where the lights are turned out at ten. Uri Gordon, head of Youth Aliyah, has even predicted that the Ethiopian Jews will themselves prove to be the rescuers of those who have rescued them, that they will raise Israelis from the depression in which they are sunk and inject new life into the Zionist enterprise.

But beyond this, many Israelis seem to have sensed that they share with these outcast people something more than common human status, namely, a common history and common hopes and aspirations. The photographs of joyous family reunions, of grievous family separations, above all of orphaned children, have brought to the mind's eye of countless Israelis the pictures of European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. The overriding wish of the Ethiopian Jews has been the same as that of the remnants of European Jewry after World War II: to reach Israel. Israelis with a longer historical memory have also recognized the similarity between the religious persecution of the ancient Jewish community of Ethiopia and that of ancient (if not equally ancient) Jewish communities of Eastern Europe by Christian establishments eternally fearful of a primal Jewish taint.* Finally, Israelis—and they are still the vast majority of the population—for whom the Hebrew Bible has a unique resonance cannot but feel that the great themes of the story of Joseph and his brothers, of Jacob and his sons, are being reenacted before their eyes. The brotherhood between Israeli and Ethiopian Jews is reaffirming itself, despite decades of betrayal or neglect; and among the Beta-Yisrael the ties that bind the souls of sons and fathers have showed their magical capacity to survive unspeakable suffering and shattering upheaval.

IT MUST be stressed that Israel's sense of a bond of unity between itself and the Jews of Ethiopia is national and religious, not ethnic. The Ethiopian Jews do not look or eat or dress or dance or talk or sing like any of the major ethnic groups of Israel. But they observe the Torah, and the phenomenon of their ready acceptance by the people of Israel suggests that in this allegedly secular country Jewish religion is after all a principle of unity that is ultimately far stronger than the centrifugal forces nourished by the advocates of ethnicity. (Israel's only ethnic political party, the Moroccan Tami group, virtually collapsed in the last national election.)

Ironically, the only major group in Israel that finds ethnicity more important than religion in estimating the Jewishness of the Ethiopian Jews is the Chief Rabbinate and its followers. The current dual occupants of this office, whose very authority is defined by ethnic boundaries, are the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapiro and the Sephardi Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu. They have ruled that the Ethiopian Jews are not "full" Jews because their marriage ceremonies were not valid, or because their divorce proceedings were improper, or because they received converts who were not converted according to *halakhah* (Jewish religious law), or because they had customs "strange to the spirit of Judaism." Seemingly just as arbitrary have been the Chief Rabbinate's conditions for the Ethiopians' conversion: one week it is ritual immersion, then it is symbolic circumcision, then a vow of loyalty to Torah, and various combinations of the three. Some of the more zealous acolytes of the chief rabbis have even prevented the Beta-Yisrael from praying at Jerusalem's Western Wall. The Lubavitch movement, well-known for the lax and forgiving standards it applies to returnees to Judaism in the United States and Europe, has refused to accept any more Ethiopian children in its schools and is "checking the Jewish status" of those already enrolled.

There is a short and ready condemnation of the Chief Rabbinate's stand as arising from resentment at a Jewish tradition that has developed without benefit of the Oral Law and therefore without benefit of rabbis; but this is inadequate. So too is the labeling of that stand (by Israel's most aggressive anti-clerical parliamentarian, Shulamit Aloni) as "racism." Rabbinical resistance to acceptance of the Beta-Yisrael as Jews is essentially, if not exclusively, modern. Another Chief Rabbi, David ben Solomon Ibn Avi (known as *Radbaz*), who served in this capacity for forty years in Egypt, ruled that the Beta-Yisrael were indeed Jews. But that was in the 16th century. The 19th-century German Orthodox scholar, Azriel Hildesheimer, supported this view, as did Israel's first Chief Rabbi, Avraham Yitzhak Ha'Kohen Kook. The recent history of rabbinical refusal to accept the Beta-Yisrael as Jews, both in Israel's National Religious Party and in its Chief Rabbinate, is mainly an instance of modern Judaism's tendency to slide from religion into ethnicity. As Howard Sachar

* In 1267 the Church Council of Breslau declared: "In view of the fact that Poland is a *nova plantatio* in the body of Christianity, there is reason to fear that her Christian population will fall an easy prey to the influence of the superstition and evil habits of the Jews living among them, the more so as the Christian religion took root in the hearts of the faithful of these countries at a later date and in a more feeble manner." When the Jesuits descended upon Ethiopia in 1541 they came quickly to the conclusion that there was a "dangerous Hebraic mold" to the Abyssinian Christian Church, from which it would urgently have to be rescued.

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remarked of a 1968 court ruling about the rabbinate's refusal to register an Ethiopian Jew for marriage: "The Falashas . . . were suspected by the rabbinate of having intermarried in Ethiopia generations before, and therefore since they weren't Jewish by *nationality* (ethnic identification), they were not entitled to Jewish *religious* rights."

If it is ironic that Israel's appointed guardians of talmudic tradition should be the only group in the country that places ethnicity ahead of religion in this matter, it is tragic that a subject of daily public discussion has been made out of the Jewish identity of people who are religiously observant, who have suffered for countless generations because of their Jewish identity, and who have been brought to Israel under a law that applies only to Jews. In a sharp attack on the rabbinical authorities, the columnist Shmuel Katz asserted that their daily pronouncements on the Jewishness of the Ethiopian Jews showed them to be either ignorant or contemptuous of the talmudic dictum that "putting your friend to shame in public is equivalent to shedding blood." Indeed, a small group of the immigrants responded to the Chief Rabbinate by threatening to shed their own blood if they were not recognized by Israel as complete Jews, equal to all others. But such reactions are not representative of the community at large, which despite its profound resentment of the rabbinic demand for conversion, is not given to the language of threat and violence.

THE humane and generous reception of the Ethiopian Jews by the Israeli people, and the decision by the government to treat them not as relics of the Stone Age who might be taught just enough to become hewers of wood and drawers of water, but as full citizens of a free and independent state, would seem to offer conclusive proof that Zionism is not "racism." But it was naive of politicians, Yitzhak Shamir among them, to voice the hope that Israel's enemies would view the matter in this light. Assorted Marxists around the world have echoed, with local variations, the official statement issued by the Ethiopian government that "It is a serious affront to the sensibilities of world public opinion that the current drought and famine in Ethiopia should be invoked as an excuse for the Israeli-engineered . . . massive kidnapping of the Falashas. . . . The entire operation conjures up the revival of the slave trade . . . [an] act of brigandage. . . ."

But it is not only Marxists who have spewed fire and vitriol at Israel for its rescue mission. In Germany, for example, the prize for moral obscenity must go not to any of that country's large number of certified crazies and anti-Semites but to the Israel "experts" on Germany's main television news program, watched nightly by tens of millions of Germans. The main message of the report, which came within days of Israel's official acknowledgment of the rescue operation, was that here was the culminating demonstration that Zionism is another version of South African racism.

The network's reporter in Israel conveyed the first lesson of the evening, which was that the Israelis do not want the Ethiopian Jews at all; why else would they have intentionally leaked news of the airlift to the press?

The second lesson, which was taught by the network's commentator on Israeli affairs, was that Israelis are racists *because* they airlifted the Ethiopian Jews to Israel. The commentator inveighed against the "selectivity" and "egoism" of a state and religion that uprooted hungry people from native soil and transplanted them to an alien land as part of a cynical arms deal masquerading as "humanitarianism." He then trotted out the by now formulaic equation of Israelis with Nazis. Once the yellow patch had the word *Jew* inside it, but now it enclosed the label *hungry*, and the selections and transports were being conducted by Jews themselves. Did not this prove, he concluded with a flourish, that all the resolutions of the UN and of the African Solidarity Congresses equating Zionism with racism were in fact true? The only thing he neglected to do was to identify, as the ultimate instance of Israel's racism, its failure to ship its own citizens southward to starve along with the Ethiopians.

RARELY have the enemies of Jacob offered more convincing evidence of the truth of the old saying that what matters is not what the Gentiles say but what the Jews do. In fact, if no one is watching too closely, this might be one of those rare moments when Israel can take the risk of congratulating itself upon the greatness of its people and the littleness of its enemies. Operation Moses has demonstrated that it is the Jews and not their adversaries who have rightly understood the Lord's question (Amos 9:7): "Are you not like the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?"

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Allen Ginsberg Then and Now

Robert Richman

IF IT accomplishes nothing else, the appearance of Allen Ginsberg's *Collected Poems*,* an enormous volume published under the terms of a six-figure contract, should once and for all puncture the widespread notion of Ginsberg as the pariah of the American literary establishment. Even visually the *Collected Poems* is a far cry from Ginsberg's earlier books, brought out by the defiantly anti-establishment press, City Lights Books of San Francisco, a shadowy, shoestring operation that seemed permanently on the verge not only of bankruptcy but of arrest.

To be sure, this image of City Lights, far from being a liability, was at the time exactly what Ginsberg wanted for himself. When City Lights published "Howl" in 1956 he wished it known that the book contained not just poems but contraband goods—dangerous to buy and dangerous to consume. The visual design of City Lights Books contributed to the desired effect: small, square pamphlets, cheaply bound and printed, looking less like "literature" than the hastily run-off sheets of some band of revolutionary infidels. This "quick" look was supposed to be emblematic of what was inside, poetry written so harrowingly close to life that it was not expected or destined to survive.

Well, Ginsberg has been around for a very long while now, as witness his *Collected Poems*, a book of such weight and durability that even sluttish Time will have trouble besmearing it. Bound in heavy black cloth with gold lettering, wrapped in an expensive red jacket, this two-inch-thick extravaganza contains 330 poems, a preface, 51 pages of notes and documentary material (including photos and the introductions, forewords, afterwords, epigraphs, jacket copy, and dedications of all his earlier books), an index of proper names (nine pages), and an index of first lines and titles. Never has an aesthetic of obsolescence been so fastidiously preserved. And on top of this, Harper & Row has agreed to publish, in the coming years, separate volumes of Ginsberg's letters, essays and interviews, journals, a new volume of poetry entitled *White Shroud*, and an annotated edition of "Howl." No living American poet and very few dead ones have been treated so respectfully by a publisher as has Allen Ginsberg.

This tale of literary success had its inauspicious beginning in Paterson, New Jersey, where Allen Ginsberg was born in 1926. Ginsberg is thus, chronologically at least, a part of the immensely talented generation that burst on the poetry scene in the years following World War II. But while most of that generation's better poets—among them Richard Wilbur, Anthony Hecht, and Howard Nemerov—were of a decidedly formalist persuasion, Ginsberg was the freewheeling, experimental rebel.

If it is always difficult to hazard psychological reasons for nonconformity, in Ginsberg's case it is equally hard to ignore the evidence of his early life. Ginsberg's father Louis was a sober and conservative man, a high-school teacher and part-time poet who published his verse in magazines like *Saturday Review* and the *Atlantic*. His mother, Naomi, was Louis's opposite. An active Communist in the 30's, she was later afflicted with paranoid delusions about her political involvement and was institutionalized for long stretches of time. Contributing to these difficulties at home was Allen's homosexuality.

Ginsberg took this volatile psychological brew with him to Columbia University where he enrolled as a student of literature in 1943. There he encountered the eminently sane Lionel Trilling and Mark Van Doren, neither of whom proved to be the mentor he was seeking. Although he initially tried to win the approval of Trilling, his growing taste for irrationality led him, in the years between 1944 and 1946, to form attachments to such apostles of the nascent "Beat" movement as William S. Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, and Herbert Huncke—drug addicts and criminals all.

Under the influence of the ideas of this group, Ginsberg while still an undergraduate abetted his then-apartment mate, Herbert Huncke, in a burglary and for his pains wound up spending a few months at the Columbia Psychiatric Institute. But it was Neal Cassady, later immortalized as Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1957), who was the true "Nietzschean hero" (in Kerouac's phrase) of the Beats. He earned this title on the basis of his reputed sexual prowess with males and females alike. Ginsberg himself immediately fell in love with Cassady, and the two had a very brief affair.

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* Harper & Row, 837 pp., $27.50.

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Cassady's (predictable) rejection of Ginsberg—the "great mortal blow to all my tenderest hopes"—set the stage for the crucial events of his early poetic career. As documented by Ginsberg, he had been "in a very lonely solitary state, dark night of the soul sort of," when, while reading Blake's poem "Ah! Sunflower" in his Harlem apartment in 1948, he heard a "very deep earthen grave voice" which he "immediately assumed . . . was Blake's." Then:

> . . . my body suddenly felt *light*, and a sense of cosmic consciousness, vibrations, understanding, awe, and wonder and surprise [came over me]. And it was a sudden awakening into a totally deeper real universe than I'd been existing in.

Ginsberg claims that he was able to reach this "totally deeper real universe" while gazing at the cornice of his building, thinking about the labor that went into its construction, the lives involved, even the molecules it was composed of. He focused his vision until everything else around him was blotted out, at which moment he perceived the true state of the cornice, the "divine significance" of which put him into a state of "bliss." When this happened, people on the street seemed to be wearing "grotesque masks." (Similarly unenlightened souls inhabit Blake's poem "London," their faces betraying "marks of weakness, marks of woe.") Indeed, the entire "fallen" world seemed distorted, out of touch with the "cosmic consciousness" Ginsberg now possessed.

THE first poem Ginsberg wrote after these "Blake visions"—it appears third in the *Collected Poems*—is the decorative, Elizabethan-inspired sonnet, "I dwelled in Hell on earth to write this rhyme."

> I dwelled in Hell on earth to write this rhyme,
> I live in stillness now, in living flame;
> I witness Heaven in unholy time,
> I room in the renownèd city, am
> Unknown. The fame I dwell in is not mine,
> I would not have it. Angels in the air
> Serenade my senses in delight.
> Intelligence of poets, saints and fair
> Characters converse with me all night.
> But all the streets are burning everywhere.
> The city is burning these multitudes that climb
> Her buildings. Their inferno is the same
> I scaled as a stupendous blazing stair.
> They vanish as I look into the light.

This weakly imitative poem succeeds in relating the fact that the speaker has had an otherworldly experience; but that is all. Unlike Blake, Ginsberg does not succeed in altering our normal ways of thinking and seeing in order to penetrate to the truer essence of reality; nor does he link what he sees with a vision for the future of humanity at large. And he is still in thrall here to what Blake dismissed as "the modern bondage of Rhyming," or "Poetry Fedder'd." Later, Ginsberg would follow Blake's advice in the matter of versification, but in this early work, in the words of Paul Portugés, author of a study entitled *The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg*, his habits of prosody "paralleled his misdirection in the search for supernatural realities."

Ginsberg continued to write in this fashion for three more years. (These early poems are included in his first book, *The Gates of Wrath*, completed in 1951 but not published until twenty-one years later.) But while he was trying to make his visionary poems more visionary, another poetic influence drifted into his orbit. Sometime during 1951, William Carlos Williams replied to a parcel of "Elizabethan" poems Ginsberg had sent, and castigated the young poet for relying too much on archaic forms and diction. "In this mode perfection is basic," declared the godfather of imperfection. Ginsberg, heeding Williams's warning, immediately produced a batch of poems of a distinctly mundane and imperfect bent. This one, dated April 1952, is entitled "A Crazy Spiritual":

> A faithful youth
> with artificial legs
> drove his jalopy
> through the towns of Texas.
>
> He got sent out
> of the Free Hospital
> of Galveston, madtown
> on the Gulf of Mexico
>
> after he recovered.
> They gave him a car
> and a black mongrel;
> name was Weakness. . . .

Here Ginsberg is fully as derivative—this time, of Williams—as he had been of Wyatt and Surrey in *The Gates of Wrath*. He also displays less care in his writing, although this too may be credited to the Williams aesthetic. More importantly, the mundane impulse appropriated from Williams opens the way to what will soon become Ginsberg's patented note of despair:

> How sick I am!
> that thought
> always comes to me
> with horror.
> Is it this strange
> for everybody?
> But such fugitive feelings
> have always been my
> métier.
>
> ("Marijuana Notation")

What is wrong with these poems, collected in Ginsberg's second volume, *Empty Mirror* (again published later—in 1961), was well expressed by Marianne Moore in a sharp and characteristically honest letter to their author:

> Patient or impatient repudiating of life, just repudiates itself. There is no point to it. What can be exciting to others is one's struggle with what is too hard. Unless one is improved by what hurts one, it can't be of interest to others. . . . If we share in the conspiracy against ourselves and

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call existence an insult, who cares what we write?*

MARIANNE MOORE'S words fell on deaf ears. During his incarceration in the Columbia Psychiatric Institute, Ginsberg had befriended an insane inmate named Carl Solomon, and Solomon returned the favor by introducing Ginsberg to the work of the French surrealists. This became one of the primary sources of the new style Ginsberg unveiled in "Howl" (1956), dedicated to Solomon. Another was Jack Kerouac's theory of spontaneous, or automatic, writing, which forced Ginsberg to elongate his lines so that they could accommodate whatever came into his head. ("First thought, best thought," was his dictum at the time.) And a final catalyzing event during this period was Ginsberg's move to San Francisco in 1954, where he obtained work as a market researcher.

According to the Ginsberg legend, this encounter with the "straight" world was one of the factors that lent "Howl" its authenticity as a document of social and spiritual liberation. If by liberation one means the willed celebration of depravity, dereliction, and obscenity, the poem certainly qualifies as one of the most liberated in American literature:

> I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed
> by madness, starving hysterical naked,
> dragging themselves through the negro streets
> at dawn looking for an angry fix,
> angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient
> heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in
> the machinery of night,
> who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and
> high sat up smoking in the supernatural dark-
> ness of cold-water flats floating across the
> tops of cities contemplating jazz. . . .

Apart from its status as a relic of 50's radicalism, however, "Howl" raises some problems as a poem. The divergent impulses Ginsberg had been toying with—the transcendent impulse of Blake, the mundane impulse of Williams—are uncomfortably conflated here. It is easy enough to see the materialism of Williams; it is found in the naked revelations of Ginsberg's tortured personal life. What could be more "real" than this passage about Neal Cassady?

> who went out whoring through Colorado in
> myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret hero of
> these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver
> —joy to the memory of his innumerable lays
> of girls in empty lots & diner backyards,
> moviehouses' rickety rows, on mountaintops
> in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar
> roadside lonely petticoat upliftings & especial-
> ly secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, &
> hometown alleys too, . . .

The visionary side, however, is more elusive: there are about as many theories of where this quality resides in "Howl" as there are critics who have undertaken to write on the subject. One of the most eloquent, Paul Portugés, follows Ginsberg himself in focusing on the influence of Paul Cézanne. It all started, relates Portugés, when Ginsberg, as a student at Columbia, saw a group of Cézanne's canvases at the Museum of Modern Art. On one of his first visits to the museum the young poet was gazing at one of Cézanne's landscapes:

> "[T]here's a strange sensation that one gets [said Ginsberg], looking at his canvases, which I began to associate with the extraordinary sensation—cosmic sensation, in fact—that I had experienced catalyzed by Blake's 'Sunflower' and 'Sick Rose' and a few other poems." This "cosmic sensation" he felt while peering into Cézanne's landscapes was a "strange, shuddering impression" and a "sudden shift, a flashing" in his mind that created a momentary "gap" in consciousness caused by the "space gap" in Cézanne's paintings. . . .

The "space gap" in Cézanne's paintings—literally, the "gap" between dots of color—conjured up for Ginsberg what Portugés calls the "perfect Plotinian other world of timelessness and eternal transcendence." Contemplating how he himself might "develop a poetry that would help the reader find 'Heaven and Eternity' . . . between the lines and images of a poem," Ginsberg went back to the museum under the "suggestive influence" of "a lot of marijuana." He then began, as he himself has related, "turning on to space in Cézanne." The disoriented poet noticed how the rocks of *The Rocks of Garonne* were not rocks at all but amorphous "rock parts" (the same perception he had had in looking at the cornices of his building). Ginsberg: ". . . [A]ctually [Cézanne had] *re*constituted the whole fucking universe in his canvases."

As in painting, so in poetry. Where Cézanne juxtaposed "one color against another" to produce the effect of "cosmic sensation," so too "the gap between two words" placed next to each other in a poem would force the "mind [to] fill in with the sensation of existence." In other words, between the words in such two-word phrases in "Howl" as "hydrogen jukebox," "heterosexual dollar," "nitroglycerin shrieks," "catatonic piano," and "angelheaded hipsters" the reader is supposed to get the feeling of Eternity Ginsberg got while gazing at the dots in Cézanne's landscapes.

From today's vantage point, of course, these two-word phrases strike a note less of cosmic sensation than of stale Bob Dylan. Even in theory, however, it is clearly impossible to liken the juxtaposition of colors to the juxtaposition of words, for the simple reason that words have specific meanings and colors do not. Nor can black and white squiggles on a page ever create atmosphere and light the way Cézanne's colors do. All this,

* Moore's previously unpublished letter to Ginsberg is included in a new volume called *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*, edited by Lewis Hyde, University of Michigan Press, 461 pp., $22.00.

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incidentally, quite apart from the fact that Cézanne's pictures rather beautifully cohere in a way that Ginsberg's poems rarely do.

Nevertheless, Ginsberg and Kerouac were so enamored of this "gap" effect they supposedly "adapted" from Cézanne that they began studying a four-volume set of translations of Japanese haiku—a form of poetry which they thought exemplified the same principle. In Ginsberg's words, haikus "present two distinct images, yet side by side without drawing a logical conclusion between them: the *mind* fills in this . . . space." Thus, he quotes a haiku by Issa:

O ant
crawling up Mount Fujiyama
but slowly, slowly

Ginsberg's gloss: "Now you have the small ant and you have Mount Fujiyama and you have the 'slowly, slowly' and what happens is that you feel almost like . . . a cock in your mouth! You feel this enormous space-universe, it's almost a tactile thing. Well, anyway it's a phenomenon-sensation."

So much for Cézanne; so much for haiku.

We come back in the end to Blake. Many critics have located the elusive visionary quality in "Howl" in the prophetic structure Ginsberg borrows from Blake, and indeed the three parts of "Howl" do reflect a transforming spiritual odyssey reminiscent of that poet. Thus, the first section reveals that the Beats, the "best minds" of Ginsberg's generation, will revolutionize our distorted ways of thinking and seeing by identifying the true path we are to take (the path, that is, of madness and delinquency). The second part inculpates America as the enemy of this revolutionary undertaking. The third part affirms the status of the Beats, despite temporary defeats, as prophets and seers; this is done through the glorification of Carl Solomon.

This three-part scheme conforms well to Blake's prophetic mode; what is more, "Howl" is written entirely in un-"Fedder'd" lines. But there is a problem, and it derives from the dominant note of confessionalism in "Howl." The confessional poet, cleaving very closely to the details of real life and real emotions, is clearly at odds with the visionary who sees the actual world as a fallen place that needs to be wiped clean. Moreover, the solipsism of confessionalist poetry is deeply opposed to the notion that there are secret visions whose significance can only be revealed by a prophet armed with special powers of transcendence. The debt to Blake, then, is at best merely a formal one, if it is not factitious altogether.

It is thus no wonder that most of the critics who have praised "Howl" have had to ignore Ginsberg's claims to be a visionary, and have focused instead on the ruthless "authenticity" of his revelations about himself and his feelings. But here too one is compelled to raise a question: is this famous authenticity authentic?

Of course, nothing is more difficult to ascertain than the emotional truth of a piece of writing. But luckily one critic, Paul Breslin, has undertaken to investigate the incidents that gave rise to Ginsberg's recorded feelings in "Howl" and to check them against the emotional level of the poetry. In "The Origins of 'Howl' and 'Kaddish,'" published in the Spring 1977 *Iowa Review*, Breslin demonstrates, on the basis of a dogged perusal of Ginsberg's unpublished journals and other material at the confidential Allen Ginsberg Archive at Columbia University, that Ginsberg's much-publicized account of the origins of these two poems is largely invention.

According to the established myth surrounding "Howl," the twenty-seven-year-old Ginsberg, under instruction by his San Francisco psychiatrist to drop everything and pursue his true desires, promptly got himself fired from his job as a market researcher and moved into an apartment with his lover, Peter Orlovsky. This turn of affairs allegedly released Ginsberg's heretofore pent-up sensibilities and led to the writing of "Howl," an ode to sexual, social, and poetic freedom.

The truth, Breslin writes, is different:

> Ginsberg's account of these events sounds suspiciously like a fantasy or a magical cure, and a reading of the journals he kept at the time reveals that even the chronology has been transformed a bit to promote the myth of the Breakthrough. Actually, Ginsberg continued to work at his market-research job for three or four months *after* he moved in with Orlovsky and insofar as his journals reveal his mood at the time, they suggest he felt depressed, not liberated, when he lost the job. Moreover, while Ginsberg strongly implies that his therapy (and even the need for it) ended with his doctor's laying on of hands, the journals indicate that he continued in treatment, perhaps as long as several months, including the time that "Howl" was written. Moreover, the lengthy and almost daily entries from late 1954, when he first met Orlovsky, show that Ginsberg entered this relationship with the same premonitions of disaster with which he then launched all of his activities.

Clearly, Ginsberg twisted events and his responses to them in order to make the "breakthrough" appear more decisive than it was. And Breslin has a similar tale to tell about "Kaddish" (1961), Ginsberg's notoriously "candid" confessional poem about his mother's insanity and death. Altogether, Breslin's researches into the emotional circumstances surrounding "Howl" and "Kaddish" tend to support a dark utterance on the subject of literary authenticity by Joseph Conrad: "I have always suspected, in the effort to bring into play the extremities of emotion, the debasing touch of insincerity."

The poems Ginsberg wrote in the late 50's were collected in *Reality Sandwiches* (1963); despite the title, they show him pursuing new routes to transcendence. Here is a section of a poem called "Laughing Gas" (1958):

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Stepping outside the universe
by means of Nitrous Oxide
anesthetizing mind-consciousness.

* * * * *

O waves of probable
and improbable
Universes—

I'll finish this poem
in my next life.

The titles of other poems of this period similarly telegraph Ginsberg's favored means of dispatch to heaven: "Mescaline," "Lysergic Acid," "Aether."

But Ginsberg's commitment to "Eternity" (as he calls it in "Psalm II," a reaffirmation of his "Blake Visions" of twelve years earlier) did not last long. On a trip to India in 1963, he was introduced to Buddhism. Under the paternal influence of various gurus and sages, Ginsberg was persuaded to abandon the task of revealing God and his angels to a benighted mankind, and was instructed instead to accept the "human universe" of the body and the world. This about-face was recorded in a poem aptly entitled "The Change: Kyoto-Tokyo Express," written in July 1963:

Open the portals to what Is,
The mattress covered with sheets,
soft pillows of skin,

* * * * *

Tears allright, and laughter
allright
I am that I am—. . . .

The two central principles of Ginsberg's new religion were relativism (no good or bad) and selflessness (repudiating "great Whitman's universal Self"). The shift left its mark on the poetry of these years. The poems in the volume entitled *The Fall of America* (published in 1973 but containing the work of 1965-71), no longer written in order to express Ginsberg's quasi-demented self, are relatively egoless projections of the real world. The opening lines of "Beginning a Poem of These States," written in September 1965, are typical:

Under the bluffs of Oroville, blue cloud September skies, entering U.S. border, red red apples bend their tree boughs propt with sticks—

At Omak a fat girl in dungarees leads her big brown horse by asphalt highway.

Through lodgepole pine hills Coleville near Moses' Mountain—a white horse standing back of a 2 ton truck moving forward between trees.

Unfortunately, the replacement of linguistic chaos determined by the self with linguistic chaos determined by selflessness does not produce poetry of a markedly improved character—only more boring than usual.

Meanwhile, Ginsberg's earlier message of do-it-yourself transcendence was being adopted by the culture at large—and with a vengeance. Before long, thanks to the wide availability of drugs, an entire generation of mini-prophets was practicing spiritual transcendence right here on earth. Ginsberg, despite his new stance in the here-and-now, was not moved to caution against the use of drugs; on the contrary, he publicly supported it, testifying before a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee in June 1966 that LSD was a "useful educational tool" which granted "a new sense of openness."

NEVERTHELESS, the mass appropriation of what was essentially the Beat aesthetic must have alarmed Ginsberg, who had valued the Beats as an exclusive, elite club. What, after all, was distinctive about a bearded, hooting ex-prophet when drugs and William Blake in paperback were available to all? Perhaps that is why Ginsberg now entered the world of politics. Not only did his poetry become increasingly political in this period, but Ginsberg himself became a political figure. With cameras and reporters documenting his every move, he marched on the Pentagon, staged rallies at the various party conventions, and sat-in at scores of sites. He even visited Havana and the Soviet Union. Perhaps his greatest single moment came during a visit to Prague in 1965, when he was elected "King of May" at the traditional May Day festival; Ginsberg's poem about the incident, "Kral Majales," reflects the surge in his ego that had been momentarily quelled by his Buddhist mentors:

And I am the King of May, which is the power
of sexual youth,
and I am the King of May, which is industry in
eloquence and action in amour,
and I am the King of May, which is long hair of
Adam and the Beard of my own body
and I am the King of May, which is Kral Majales
in the Czechoslovakian tongue,
and I am the King of May, which is old Human
poesy, and 100,000 people chose my name,
and I am the King of May, and in a few minutes
I will land at London Airport. . . .

The notoriety that accrued to Ginsberg on account of his political activities inevitably prompted a return to his old hobby of prophecy. But the prophetic poetry of the 60's is, if anything, even more pretentious than its 50's counterpart. "Wichita Vortex Sutra," for example, written in February 1966, contains a call for the end of the Vietnam war so pathetic that it made even Ginsberg's most ardent admirers cringe:

I call all Powers of imagination
to my side in this auto to make Prophecy,
all Lords
of human kingdoms to come
Shambu Bharti Baba naked covered with ash. . . .

I lift my voice aloud,
make Mantra of American language now,
I here declare the end of the War!
Ancient days' Illusion!—
and pronounce words beginning my own
millennium
Let the States tremble,
let the Nation weep,
let Congress legislate its own delight
let the President execute his
own desire—

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this Act done by my own voice,
nameless Mystery—

Ginsberg's revived penchant for wild declaration went hand in hand with an increasingly vitriolic anti-Americanism. "Eclogue," an eleven-page poem written in 1970, begins:

In a thousand years, if there's History
America'll be remembered as a nasty
little Country
full of Pricks. . . .

A poem dated July 1972 and entitled "These States: to Miami Presidential Convention," runs:

Woe to the States, whoever's the empty President
Nixon McGovern X or Caesar
Must decree end to matter habit,
America swallowing aluminum sleeping pills
Cries of millions of trees travel thru TV
loudspeakers to the Athletic Club's basement
steamroom—

(Of the book in which this poem appears, *Mind Breaths* [1978], the critic Hayden Carruth wrote, incredibly, that Ginsberg "has returned to poems of the imagination, poems arising from within, complexes of feeling. . . ." But the compiling of incredible critical statements about Ginsberg is a task all in itself, and a much too easy one.)

By the middle of the 1970's, however, Ginsberg seems to have tired of political activism, and under the guidance of a monk named Trungpa, he began returning to Buddhism. Trungpa, born in 1938 in Tibet, educated at Oxford (where he acquired a taste for poetry), had become by the mid-60's the guru of choice among American literati. In 1970 he founded a Tibetan monastery in Vermont and before long had established numerous "schools" that attracted an ever-growing number of disciples. Allen Ginsberg was one of these disciples, and soon a favorite. When Trungpa opened his Naropa Institute in 1974, he designated Ginsberg leader of the department called the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Ginsberg in turn brought many of his poet-friends to Naropa, including John Ashbery, Robert Creeley, and W.S. Merwin.

Then, in 1975, at a wild Halloween party which has now become a legend, a drunken Trungpa, unable to convince Merwin and his lady companion, the Hawaiian poet Dana Naone, to join in the revelry, ordered his "guards" to break down the door and fetch the recalcitrant couple from Merwin's room. But no sooner was the door smashed in than the poet started wildly swinging a broken beer bottle at Trungpa's guards. There were injuries, and a considerable amount of blood. When Merwin finally surrendered, he and Miss Naone were brought to the center of the room. One hundred of Trungpa's disciples watched in silence as their leader threw saké in Merwin's face and ordered the couple to strip. In a moment of pathetic desperation, Miss Naone yelled, "Call the police!"

News of the incident spread quickly, and cast a certain discredit on the saintly Trungpa. As for Allen Ginsberg, Trungpa's biggest and most famous supporter, he had this comment:

> In the middle of that scene, to yell "Call the police"—do you realize how *vulgar* that was? The Wisdom of the East was being unveiled, and she's going, "Call the police!" I mean, shit! Fuck that shit! Strip 'em naked, break down the door!

Yet when in a 1976 interview Ginsberg was asked, "How, if at all, has your work with Trungpa—your extensive meditation practice—changed your outlook on North American or world politics?," he replied:

> It has changed it somewhat from a negative fix on the "fall of America" as a dead-end issue—the creation of my resentment—into an appreciation of the fatal karmic flaws in myself and the nation. Also with an attempt to make use of those flaws or work with them—be aware of them—without animosity or guilt; and find some basis for reconstruction of a humanely useful society, based mainly on a less attached, less apocalyptic view.

Whether Ginsberg's attack on Merwin and Naone was owing to "karmic flaws" or to "a less attached, less apocalyptic view" must remain an open question.

There, at any rate, we have the passage of Allen Ginsberg, radical scourge, hero of the counterculture, mystic, now the proud holder of a six-figure book deal and seemingly irrevocable status as a major American poet. It should come as no surprise at the end to learn that the latest role of this free spirit has been to act as censor to a new generation of academics and critics whose assigned job is to preserve the Ginsberg myth. The aging poet now regularly haunts Modern Language Association conventions and academic meetings, "not to throw potato salad," as Paul Breslin remarks (in *From Modern to Contemporary: American Poetry, 1945-1965*), but to ensure that nothing contradictory to the myth be taught, written, or in any way perpetuated. "No one," says Breslin, "can quote from the [Columbia Archive] without Ginsberg's permission, and in my own experience in using this collection, he demanded to see and to approve the entire essay in which the quotations appeared—a strange stance for a man whose first book was involved in a censorship trial."

In the final poem of the *Collected Poems*, "Capitol Air," Ginsberg writes:

Truth may be hard to find but Falsehood's easy
Read between the lines our Imperialism is
sleazy

One need not read between the lines of Allen Ginsberg's life and work to find sleaziness abounding.

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Gifted and Talented

A Story

Tova Reich

JEREMY WAS right-brained, luckily for us, which is why he was accepted into the Academy for the Gifted and Talented. Luckily for us, I say, but, in fact, it was for him, for our darling Jeremy, that it was lucky, since, as everyone knows, the Academy for the Gifted and Talented is the nursery school that serves as the feeder into the most prestigious kindergartens and lower schools, unloading into the high-powered middle and upper schools, and flushing out, in the final analysis, with a mighty, uplifting surge, into the great colleges—the select, the orgasmic colleges. Jeremy was two-and-a-half when we applied for him at the Academy for the Gifted and Talented. At the time of his interview, his Oshkoshes were still chronically bloated with a paper diaper that rustled like a worthy tome you had always meant to read. Yet despite his tender years, Jeremy was perfectly capable of assimilating our agenda, and we laid it out before him like a spreadsheet; we were willing—indeed, we regarded ourselves as privileged—to facilitate him by paying the Academy's tuition fee of five thousand dollars annually for the two-and-one-half hours of daily nursery-school interaction, excluding long weekends, holidays, and the necessary restorative summer vacations, but Jeremy, for his part, must deliver, must deliver at the peak of his powers, which, we had every reason to believe, were awesome.

The admissions requirements to the Academy for the Gifted and Talented included a letter of recommendation, which, in our Jeremy's case, was provided by the President of the United States himself, whom my husband, a podiatrist, had had the distinct honor of serving. And though we worried at the outset about how the grueling battery of tests—psychosocial, self-esteem, family relations, peer relations, spatial relations, small and large muscle, data processing, brain-side dominance, and so on—would impact on such a sensitive and caring child as Jeremy, we offered him up to the pressure nonetheless because the potential rewards were so manifest, needless to say. And I should say that Jeremy's performance was museum quality. During the critical brain-side dominance test, for instance, at which I was permitted to observe (Jeremy was still fixated at the separation-anxiety stage so that he actually took the test while seated in my lap), Jeremy was confronted with a box of pegs and a pegboard. Naturally curious, he poked around in the box and came up with a peg. The ever-smiling tester asked him what color it was. "Gween," Jeremy said. "Vewy good," said the tester, and she meant it sincerely, because she, like I, was experienced enough to recognize that, obviously, Jeremy knew perfectly well that the peg was really red, but he preferred, for the most personal creative and aesthetic reasons, to view it from the perspective of green. "And what do we do with it?" the tester inquired enthusiastically, referring to the peg in question. Jeremy responded without hesitation, by inserting it into his nose. "Wonderful!" and the tester actually clapped her hands in delight. No doubt remained now that Jeremy was certifiably right-brained—intuitive, creative, original—and right-brained specimens were the candidates of choice at the Academy for the Gifted and Talented.

From the Academy, Jeremy moved on, almost as a matter of course, to the Summa Cum Laude Enrichment Institute, encompassing grades K through twelve. Summa Cum Laude Enrichment needs no endorsement from me; it has been deservedly likened to a greased, or, better yet, an anointed, chute, that, as it were, conveys its students directly into the most outstanding institutions of higher learning. After that, all doors would be open for our Jeremy—life itself would be smoother, and even illness, death, and other assorted tragedies would not be overly messy. From our point of view, after Jeremy got into Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, he was set; over the next dozen or so years, we could maintain a posture of vigilant relaxation, or relaxed vigilance, as the case may be, provided Jeremy did his share, worked hard, never flagging either curricularly or extracurricularly. We, for our part, were committed to aiding and abetting him in every way possible, assisting with homework and projects,

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arranging after-school socialization opportunities, chauffeuring him to sports practices, music lessons, computer class, and so on, and worrying either in a free-floating or focused sense, as the need arose—in a nutshell, parenting in the finest modern tradition. This was the deal, and we were never forced to twist Jeremy's arm to get him to comply. He was five years old when he entered Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, but he could already decode. There were no doubts in his keen and bright young mind that the package we had designed was exclusively for him. We, personally, had nothing to gain from our investment.

At the time we applied Jeremy to the Summa Cum Laude Enrichment Institute, the headmistress of the Academy for the Gifted and Talented put substantial pressure on us to keep Jeremy on at her school, which had recently expanded with a kindergarten and first grade. She cited the advantages of the more individualized attention that could be provided in her smaller classrooms, pointing, with special pride, for instance, to such personally tailored programs as the one in which a little Brazilian girl named Claudia was receiving instruction in "her native language—Spanish." But, in the end, we opted for the more established and secure Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, although, as we assured the headmistress until we were blue in the face, we had no doubt that the Academy for the Gifted and Talented would grow to become one of the most competitively sought-after prep schools in the land. Our appeasement strategy paid off, and the headmistress proceeded to write a very supportive letter of recommendation in Jeremy's behalf to Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, which required three letters, two from the preschool, and one from an outside acquaintance. The second letter was composed by Jeremy's teacher. She wrote:

> Jeremy is a uniquely mature five-year-old, with a commendably precocious view of reality. He instinctively understands systems, hierarchies, and rankings, including his own space in the scheme of things. Endowed with a sense of the concrete acute beyond his years, he oftentimes refers to me, his teacher, as "The Desk," and more than once he has been heard to remark as follows: "If you rub The Desk the wrong way, you get a splinter in your belly." In short, a child with remarkably sane priorities, who listens to his own body as well as to those of others.

The third letter in support of Jeremy's application, which we again solicited from the President of the United States, was justifiably returned to us by Summa Cum Laude Enrichment as unacceptable, with a note to the effect that Presidents come and go, whereas Summa Cum Laude Enrichment is a centuries-old institution that values permanence. Since my husband had never had occasion to treat professionally either the Pope or a dictator for life, we turned to S. C. L. Lowell, a descendant of the founder of the Institute (and, incidentally, son of Lowell Athletic Center), who, unfortunately for him but fortunately for us, was afflicted with a case of hereditary hammertoe, which is how my husband had the privilege of making his acquaintance. Mr. Lowell generously agreed to write for Jeremy. "Yours is exactly the kind of family we need to diversify with at Summa Cum Laude Enrichment," old man Lowell kindly said to my husband, and he asked to meet Jeremy for lunch at his club. Then he graciously sent us a copy of the letter he wrote to his cronies on the board, which contained, among other insights, this astute comment: "Jerm's one five-year-old who knows exactly where he's going. On the great chain of being, he knows his link. He's got a grip to fit the handle of any attaché case the world can dish out!"

INDEED, even the most obtuse person could not help but notice how sensible, how organized, how inner-directed and goal-oriented Jeremy was. When he was only four years old, Jeremy elaborated his theory of life. Life is a program, he said; you just go from one thing to the next until you get it over with. "Register me for breakfast!" he would cry out first thing when he woke up in the morning. Using this "program" model, it was wonderful how quickly time flew for Jeremy, whereas I remember how, when I was a child Jeremy's age and even older, time moved so slowly for me, so painfully slowly. Every second was etched with a bloodied needle. Now, of course, as an adult, the days and weeks and months and years fly by so lightly, you feel almost nothing; you turn around, they're gone, thank the Lord, and you casually, but without regret, wonder where they went. For Jeremy it's already this way, and to my mind it's truly marvelous, truly merciful and humane, one of the miracles of modern life, equivalent, in every respect, to the discovery of anesthesia for use in surgery.

The Summa Cum Laude Enrichment Institute is, of course, left-brained, stressing linear, logical, analytical, and higher-level critical thinking and problem-solving skills, but Jeremy's chances for admission were never really adversely affected by his alma mater's, the Academy for the Gifted and Talented's, well-known preference for right-brain dominance. Summa Cum Laude Enrichment simply took it for granted that the Academy's testing procedures were primitive and non-indicative, and after Jeremy successfully completed the diagnostic and prescriptive battery of Summa Cum Laude Enrichment entrance examinations—patterns, sequences, analogies, inductive and deductive reasoning, divergent and convergent thinking, motivation level, frustration tolerance, reality-awareness—he was formally declared to be left-brain dominant. That settled any remaining doubts on that score. Naturally, I was not allowed to be present during any of the tests, but afterward I couldn't help probing Jeremy a bit on some of the questions he had been asked. The lady, Jeremy reported, had asked him to count

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backward by sevens, to describe what he'd do if he were standing on a track and two trains were coming toward him from opposite directions, to tell the meaning of the saying, A rolling stone gathers no moss, to name the President of the United States. Believe it or not, not many five-year-olds would have known the answer to that last one, but Jeremy, of course, did, for my husband, although he is scrupulous about guarding the confidentiality of his clients, couldn't resist letting out a harmless little after-dinner boast in that case. But counting backward by sevens? Could you really do that, Jeremy? And he proceeded to give me a demonstration. What a child—absolutely mind-boggling, fully prepared for any eventuality. And how did you explain the rolling-stone thing, honey? "Take a local, take an express, never stop till you reach success," Jeremy answered, quoting from my elementary-school autograph album that he liked to leaf through, trading maxims the way kids once used to waste their time trading baseball cards. And, Jeremy, what about the one with the trains heading for a collision and you standing there on the track? Jeremy stood up, puffed out his little chest like Superman, screwed his face into an expression of terminal straining, stretched his arms out to the maximum, the palms flattened heroically to halt the oncoming hurtling engines. A small shriek escaped me, and I clapped my hands over my mouth, for fear of reinforcing the child's anxieties. "You didn't really say that, Jeremy baby," I implored. "It's all right, Mommy," he said, and, suddenly, he looked so forlorn and bereft; "Don't worry, I gave her what she wanted."

Before I go on with the heartwarming story of Jeremy's early educational career, I want to elaborate just a bit on the subject I referred to earlier, namely, the conquest of time, which, it seems to me, is the least-acknowledged achievement of our age, equal in every respect to the much-ballyhooed exploration of space—I'm referring to cosmic space *and* inner space, as well as to the recognition of each individual's need for personal space. I can't tell you how fortunate I consider Jeremy to be, living as he does in an era when time is not leaden, when it does not drag, does not weigh heavily on collapsible shoulders as it did when I was a girl and I'd complain to my mother that I had nothing to do and she'd solemnly advise me to go bang my head against a wall. If Jeremy were ever to make such a complaint to me I'd run out immediately and schedule him for another course. But, naturally, he would not, for, thanks to modern ingenuity, boredom is a thing of the past. Jeremy has been spared. And this is because we have learned to manage time, to deal with time so that, for all intents and purposes, it no longer exists as we once knew it, but has been reprocessed into the form of quality time. We have penetrated the solid mass of time, fractured it into a multitude of small parts and pumped into each of those parts an activity or whatever, so that a person perpetually has a sense of progress and completion, a feeling of working toward a goal or an end, a comforting sense of finitude—of a finite allotment of, say, Suzuki lessons, gymnastic classes, swimming lessons, karate lessons, daydreaming lessons, etc., to get through, after which one could consider oneself done. Those who hypocritically lament that they have no time should take a salutary look at persons less fortunate than they, at the bums and loafers and stallers and goof-offs who still suffer from all the time in the world. That would be some revelation for the belly-achers; they would swiftly realize how lucky they are, and be thankful.

At Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, too, time had been packaged, organized into work units and play units, and then further subdivided into numerous stimulating parcels, too numerous and time-consuming to list. The academic program at Summa Cum Laude Enrichment was extremely rigorous and demanding. It goes without saying that every child who was accepted at the Summa Cum Laude Enrichment Institute and who survived through the grueling kindergarten into the first grade was gifted and talented. But by the middle of Jeremy's first-grade year, perhaps in an effort to keep up with the educational breakthroughs as reflected in other heavyweight institutions, a great demand swelled up to install a program at Summa Cum Laude Enrichment to serve the needs of the *highly* gifted and talented student. At the same time there was a shameless counter-outcry (initiated, most likely, by parents who, knowing themselves only too well, feared their offspring didn't have the stuff) that such a program would be elitist, exclusionary, and detrimental to overall school cohesion and spirit. However, the consensus was that at Summa Cum Laude Enrichment, the issue of elitism was moot. Moreover, the highly gifted and talented were a woefully neglected group, everyone agreed, an endangered species turned off by the routine classroom, a newly-discovered tribe, an unmined treasure. By the time Jeremy entered second grade, the champions of progress had triumphed over the forces of reaction, and HGT-130 (the numbers were never satisfactorily explained, but to me they always signified the minimum acceptable I.Q.) was put into place.

I PERSONALLY kept my nose out of the politics that buzzed around the implementation of HGT-130, but there's no question that I was acutely reactive to every leak in the proceedings. When it comes to the destiny of my child, I am an interventionist; I sensed instinctively that whether or not Jeremy got into HGT-130 would be tantamount to a statement about his destiny. Throughout this period of uncertainty I was aware of a certain gnawing worry, a shadow lurking in the background of my life: would Jeremy make it or wouldn't he? And then, on a Saturday morning, the letter arrived: "We are

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pleased to inform you. . . ." I screamed in exultation, whirled the child around the room. "You made it, baby! Gifted! Talented! Highly, monkey, highly!" I must have looked to him like the nightmare of a mother gone berserk. I had ejected that scream quite involuntarily, the ecstatic dance was actually out-of-control relief, which, in retrospect, must have been in proportion to the worry I had not fully realized I had been experiencing and suppressing all along. And what would have happened had the letter communicated the opposite news? Would I have separated myself as passionately from the child as now I drew him to me? But, no, I would have declared to him, Jeremy, I would have said, to me you'll always be the most highly gifted and talented kid on the block, and we would have lowered our heads and continued our struggle but perhaps with adjusted, more realistic sights. In no way would my commitment to or pride in Jeremy have been negatively affected had he failed to be accepted into HGT-130. In any case, had Jeremy not gotten in, there wouldn't have been any letter at all. This is always the way it is in matters of privilege. Those left out are generally not even informed of what they're missing. When, by chance, they find out, their portion is bitterness, grievance, and rue.

It's not that I feel the need to excuse myself for what some might consider an extreme, perhaps even an inappropriate, reaction to the admittedly great news of Jeremy's acceptance into HGT-130 at the age of seven. It's just that, for my own peace of mind, I feel that some sort of analysis of my response is in order. Let me just say, then, that being notified by an objective outsider that your child is highly gifted and talented is utterly satisfying and reassuring on two counts—first, on where the kid is coming from, and, secondly, on where he's going. First, from the point of view of the progenitors, it is confirmation of your top-quality stock, of your superior strain, like an official imprimatur on your genetic code, a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval on your DNA. It is, in short, a statement for all the world that touches on your image. Second, such confirmation is nothing less than the experts' researched, scientific prognostication regarding your child's fate: your kid will make it—he will make it!—he has the goods, and modern technology being what it is, inherent giftedness and talent can nowadays be identified and predicted, measured and cultivated, at a reassuringly early age, within a negligible margin of error.

Just as the amniocentesis provides a definitive print-out before birth with respect to genetic quality so that preemptive termination could be opted for if necessary, so the experts' early assessment of your child's mental style and caliber eliminates any doubts about how he will fare, and, in addition, it provides you with some direction touching upon appropriate intervention modalities. In other words, nature is behind you all the way; now, a little nurture input from your end, and it's all systems go. But, oh, to be notified definitively, and at such an early stage in the development process, that your product is state-of-the-art, that your product will climb to the top of the charts, that it will cream the marketplace—that's reinforcement, that's satisfaction, that's the promise that keeps you plugging.

I'M NOT terribly aggressive or assertive—I seldom attend PTA meetings, and, when I do, I'm inevitably too shy to hold forth—but I considered it my duty, for Jeremy's sake, to go to the orientation session for parents whose children were invited to participate in HGT-130. For Jeremy's sake, because it seemed to me a necessary and good thing that other parents recognize my child for what he is, that they and their offspring get an early warning not to discount my Jeremy, not to kiss him off, that they appreciate him as a worthy competitor, as a force to be contended with. And, thank my lucky stars, little stick-on badges were distributed as we entered the orientation room, our eyes darting brightly in every direction. Who else had been invited? That was the question. To find out it was simply a matter of a quick lick of the eyeballs across the sweet legend on the badge: HI, I'M JEREMY'S MOM. And afterward, in tranquillity, there was the slow pleasure of reflecting, in all humility and understanding, on who, for whatever personal and private reasons, was not there.

It was at this orientation session that we, the lucky parents, were apprised of the criteria for the identification of our highly gifted and talented children. The resource specialist described a multi-identification process, including teacher nominations, classroom grades, achievement-test scores, personality and motivation evaluation, creative-thinking skills, linear and spatial crystallization, as well as the results of a test administered, called the something-or-other (a kind of bird: Crow? Robin?) Identification (Progressive?) Matrix. Then the resource specialist said something truly startling. "Albert Einstein," she said, "would not have gotten into HGT-130." What could this have meant? That our kids were smarter than Einstein? It certainly could not have implied any deficiency in Summa Cum Laude Enrichment's highly-gifted-and-talented identification system. Then what could it imply? That HGT-130 had a ceiling that stopped just short of the rare, original genius? Such a conclusion was a little disappointing to contemplate at first, but then I, for one, consoled myself with the thought that, oh well, maybe Jeremy is not as bright as Einstein, but he is still bright enough for me, bright enough to become, by any standards of weights and measurements, an acknowledged success. "Because of the intrinsically discriminatory nature of the I.Q. test," the resource specialist went on to say, "no I.Q. test was administered." Of course, not one person in that orientation room, myself included, believed that statement; the I.Q. test was camouflaged in

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one of the other tests, we believed, and the statement by the resource specialist was necessary to satisfy some recondite legalism that we were all obliged to tolerate.

That was all right with us, though; we would be accomplices in this little cover-up. I.Q. scores have always been a clandestine business, even back in the dark ages of my girlhood. Someone else—a teacher, a principal, a supervisor, someone—could casually glance at my I.Q. score but I could not. They could see exactly how much I was worth in figures and calculate exactly how far I would go. Then they could sit back and have a grand giggle as they watched me blustering away, struggling to exceed my hard-and-fast numerical limit, like banging my head against a brick wall. And knowing the secret of my numbers as they knew, and watching me writhe against the inexorable as they watched, they would tick me off as the fraud I had always suspected myself of being. "But there's no question that the kids selected for HGT-130 have above average I.Q.'s," the resource specialist reassured us. So what was the interpretation of that ominous configuration of digits? The resource specialist explained: The 130 in HGT-130 referred to the time of day that the chosen children would receive their highly gifted and talented instruction—1:30 to 2:30, three afternoons a week. It was to be what they called a "pull-out" program—the children would be pulled out of their regular classroom and marched off into the exclusive one. We, as guardians, were required to sign a form authorizing Summa Cum Laude Enrichment to administer emergency highly gifted and talented treatment to our charges. The fee was one thousand dollars for the year.

As I stood in line awaiting my turn to pay, I chatted with the woman in front of me. (HI, I'M JENNIFER'S MOM; and I must admit, to my disgrace, that a part of me felt singularly irked that the supervaluable resources of HGT-130 were being indiscriminately wasted on a girl, which only goes to show how the female of my benighted generation—myself, in this case—had been permanently scarred with a self-hatred and sense of worthlessness that translates, among other ways, into an indelible disdain for other members of her own sex.) Jennifer's Mom was telling me how her daughter's acceptance into HGT-130 had virtually wiped out the self-esteem of her son, also called Jeremy, like mine, who had not been accepted. Now her Jeremy was moping around the house saying he was dumb, he was a loser—what was the point of even trying? "Well," I said, "you can always tell him that the reason he didn't get in was because he's an Einstein." Jennifer's Mom and I looked at each other nodding: fat consolation that, even if her Jeremy *were* an Einstein. (Which was doubtful: Jeremy Einstein? Anyhow, with all the image-packaging going on, even Einstein himself wasn't an Einstein any more.)

So as we waited in line to pay, I went on to tell Jennifer's Mom how, in principle, I disapproved of such programs as HGT-130: they were elitist, they were damaging to the self-esteem of those children not included, there was no incontrovertible evidence that the results were particularly positive for those who were included, and so forth. If it were up to me, I said to Jennifer's Mom, my preference would have been never to establish such a program as HGT-130 in the first place. But since it exists, and since my Jeremy has been accepted, what choice did I have but to allow him to participate? The program would go on with or without my Jeremy—right? If I kept him out for reasons of principle, the consequences would be predictable: at precisely 1:30, three times a week, those selected would get up, wave bye-bye to the dummies, and troop out of the dull classroom. Should my Jeremy remain sitting there with the rejects simply because of some arcane principle of his mother's? What good would it do my Jeremy to announce that he could have been in HGT-130 if he had wanted, but for reasons of principle. . . . Sure, sure! the rejects would chant. You're just a loser like us; don't make out like you're something special. And then, as I explained to Jennifer's Mom, there was also the separate, but no less important, issue of how it looked from the teachers' point of view; the staff was only human, don't forget. A kid in HGT-130 was automatically regarded as more valuable, and was treated accordingly. The kid acquired a reputation; he was stroked; more was expected of him, which, naturally, prodded him to deliver up, in accordance with the expectations. "We simply have to look at the realities of the situation," I said to Jennifer's Mom as she wrote out her check. And when it was my turn, I asked the resource specialist and the other specialists seated in a row behind the table whether they would mind terribly if, for the sake of convenience, I paid in advance for the next eleven years. "That's what everyone asks," the resource specialist declared (was she laughing at me?), "but each year we plan to reevaluate the children." Oh God, would my worries never end? I wrote that check with a full and grave awareness of how lucky I was to have been granted the right to do so.

They gave me a receipt. It's a good idea to save every receipt, because if the purchase is defective or if it doesn't live up to its promise, or if, for whatever reason, it becomes necessary to return it and get a refund, they won't even look at you unless you can show the receipt. Oh, what can I tell you? It's true, as I've said, that in many ways it's better for a child growing up now, what with time under control, and modern advanced technological learning centers and parenting methods so that input X will always and predictably yield outcome Y. But, in other ways, it's hard, treacherously hard, especially for the child of white collars and professionals, for what can the parents do to ease the child's way? Can they take the kid into

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the business? Can they leave him enough to provide for a secure lifetime? Can they pass on the serviceable cloak of their own comfortable distinction and accomplishment? No, nowadays, the child must struggle to make it on his own, not to surpass his parents but merely to equal them, and all we can do to help (apart from worrying in order to anticipate and thereby neutralize every possible calamity) is push, push, push—push, and give him the drive.

So for one hour three days a week throughout his second-grade year at the Summa Cum Laude Enrichment Institute, my Jeremy received highly gifted and talented supplements. And when he came home on each of those afternoons, I never failed to ask him dutifully what he had done in HGT-130. "Nothing," he invariably replied. Other parents, more quality-control oriented than I, must have wondered as well, because at the end of the school year, all of us highly gifted and talented moms and dads were invited to a presentation, a sort of recital to showcase what our prodigies had achieved over the year.

THERE ARE no words to describe what that evening was like. It was, at one and the same time, focused and loose. Focused, in the sense that we each had the opportunity, in a single time and place, to view and size up the other chosen specimens in HGT-130, who represented all the real or serious competition our own would probably ever come up against. Loose, in the sense that for once we were indulged, and we indulged ourselves, we were good to ourselves for a change, letting ourselves bask in the illusion that we were in control, that we knew what we were doing, that our children's futures were secure. Together, as a community, we melted into a warm pool of mutual and self-congratulation, for gathered here under one roof, as promised, were the certified superior children, and we, however ugly, disappointed, or inconsequential we might appear on the surface, we had produced them out of what one could only surmise were our superior materials within.

What can I say? This was entertainment! This was better than any Broadway production you could dream up! This was even more informative and ennobling than public television! The evening was so rich and varied, it's hard to know where to begin.

For example, there were the fourth-grade HGT-130ers who demonstrated the results of their in-depth study of Spanish painting of the Baroque period, flashing slides and wielding pointers, and I recall one brilliant little boy poised on a stool beside a painting by someone or other, enunciating something to the effect of how observing the fragmentation of solid reality into planes of visual impression, one could conclude that the classical but no longer adequate forms had been stunningly and necessarily toppled. And then, from the fifth grade, which had concentrated on an intensive humanistic study of the Old Testament, a darling little girl read a truly insightful paper on the erotic themes in the Book of Leviticus, another child enlightened us with excerpts from his examination of reality and illusion in Habakkuk, and a third stunned us with a psychohistory of the author of the Ten Commandments. The sixth-grade delegation reported on its fascinating multidisciplinary project, in which principles of physics, chemistry, and mathematics were applied to politics and history. The third-grade group regaled us with a delightful account of its adventures and discoveries dissecting a horse entirely in Latin. And the second-grade contingent, my own sweet Jeremy among them, rendered us speechless with its demonstration of its analysis of artificial intelligence: each child, ingeniously costumed to represent a different part of a computer, stepped forward and discoursed on his function and role. There was RAM and ROM, Bits and Bytes, Floppy Disk, and I don't know what else. And Jeremy? Jeremy, my angel, was a binary number.

"Operating in the binary mode," Jeremy piped out his part, "there are only two possible states I can indicate. I'm either on or I'm off."

Speaking from up there on the stage, he didn't look at me at all, but cast his eyes over the edge, down to the floor below. He seemed very far away, distant from me, almost lost to me, and he was high, precariously high, at that delirious elevation from which a person, gazing down, has the sensation in his knees and loins of being tugged, pulled downward by the temptation to throw himself off. When your child is in danger of falling, there is that protracted flash during which you see all the consequences unfold, you feel a sinking, a collapsing in your womb, but there's nothing you can do to save him, you can only watch.

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Yesterday's America of Tomorrow

Jeffrey Hart

BEGINNING with the late 18th century, there have been many international expositions, and they have always been expressions of progress and enlightenment. But the New York World's Fair of 1939-40 was intellectually and artistically the most successful of them all, its only possible competitor the Great Exhibition of 1851, when the fabled Crystal Palace rose up in London's Hyde Park as an expression of Britain's empire and civilization.

It all started in the depths of the Great Depression, when a group of public-spirited businessmen and civic leaders, encouraged by the success of Chicago's "Century of Progress" exposition, adopted the idea of a World's Fair in New York that, they hoped, would raise morale and perhaps stimulate business in a grim economic climate. Three months after the formation of a World's Fair Corporation, one hundred "Progressives in the Arts" gathered at a dinner party in New York's Civic Club. A series of speakers called for a new kind of Fair which, in Lewis Mumford's words, would "project a pattern that will fulfill itself in the future of the whole civilization." As Mumford saw it, the Fair should tell a story to people from all over the world "of this planned environment, this planned industry, this planned civilization. If we can point it toward the future, toward something that is progressing and growing in every department of life and throughout civilization, if we allow ourselves . . . as members of a great metropolis, to think for the world at large, we may lay the foundation for a pattern of life which would have an enormous impact in times to come."

The planners and designers had several purposes in mind of which two were paramount. First, they wanted the Fair to demonstrate that despite the pervasive fact of the Great Depression, the means were available to create material abundance for all. Second, they wished the Fair to serve as a vehicle for asserting democratic values against the looming challenges of Fascism and Communism. In both of these aims they were more successful than one might have thought possible. The Fair did to a great extent succeed in projecting a viable planned environment for both work and leisure in the future, and it did create, as one formulation had it, "a unified whole represent[ing] all of the interrelated activities and interests of the American way of life." But the sheer vitality of the creation was something no one could have planned. The bursting life of the organism that came into being at Flushing Meadows in Queens under Robert Moses's direction—on the site of what had been a garbage-strewn swampland—went far beyond the pedagogical purposes of its enlightened planners.

A CHARACTER in one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's stories describes a fair as follows: "Go to one at night and stand a little way off from it in a dark place—under dark trees. You'll see a big wheel made of lights turning in the air, and a long slide shooting boats down into the water. A band playing somewhere and a smell of peanuts—and everything will twinkle. . . . It will all just hang out there in the night like a colored balloon—like a big yellow lantern on a pole." That was in fact the way the World's Fair looked, especially at night, but it was breathtaking even in the daytime. The first thing one saw as one came down the boardwalk was the Fair's dominating symbol, the Trylon and Perisphere, the former a triangular pointed tower 610-feet high, the latter a gigantic globe the size of a city block, both gleaming white during the day and illuminated at night by blue, yellow, and pink floodlights. The Trylon and Perisphere remain alive today not only in the collective memory but in the countless memorabilia that have come down to us from the event: salt-shakers, plates, pencil sharpeners, scarves, glasses and bowls, rings and ashtrays.

The Fair's central symbol did not spring full-blown from the brains of its designers, the architectural firm of Harrison and Fouilhoux. It was part of a long tradition going back to visionary French architects of the late 18th century who had dreamed of projects based on the revolutionary clarity of simple geometrical forms. Matisse was speaking as a member of this tradition when he said that all spatial form could be resolved into three geometrical shapes: the triangle, the sphere, and the cube.

Globe-and-spire imagery was prominent in designs for the Columbia Exposition of 1893, the 700-foot Globe Tower planned for Coney Island's Steeplechase Park, and the international Christopher Columbus Lighthouse Competition of 1929. Indeed, one of the designs entered in the latter event—a tower-and-globe combination conceived by a team of Russian architects—proved strikingly prophetic of the Trylon and Perisphere. And of course always present in the minds of modern designers was the Eiffel Tower, immensely controversial in Parisian circles when it was built in 1889, its metallic geometrical simplicity a calculated insult to tradition, and to the Parisian mansard roofs and winding streets on

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which it looked down. The Trylon and Perisphere represented a climactic moment in modern architectural design, and they established themselves instantly in the popular consciousness not just as the signature of an era, but as symbols of the enormous optimistic thrust of modernity itself.

APART from everything else, the Trylon and Perisphere were of course also male and female symbols, and the designers chose to have their conception of the "World of Tomorrow" gestate, so to speak, within the female globe. They called the whole thing Democracity, and it was the most popular exhibit at the Fair. The crowds approached it along a curved, moving stairway that brought them to the entrance fifty feet in the air. Entering the Perisphere, they stepped onto two revolving balconies that formed large rings apparently suspended in midair. Standing on one or another of them, they looked out on a six-minute animated vision of the world of the future.

What they saw was the model of an ideal city of the future, a well-organized community whose inhabitants, a million in all with a working population of 250,000, lived in five satellite towns ("Pleasantvilles" if they were exclusively residential, "Millvilles" if they accommodated some industry) surrounded by lush green areas used for both agriculture and recreation. Linking the elements together was a system of superhighways which carried residents to and from their jobs at the business and cultural heart of the community (designated the Center). In a clear allusion to the New Deal's Tennessee Valley Authority, power was centrally generated by a giant hydroelectric dam.

As the crowd watched, the voice of radio announcer H.V. Kaltenborn explained how Democracity worked, while daylight faded over the great dome, dusk slowly deepened, and thousands of stars gleamed overhead. A mighty chorus then sounded from the heavens, while from ten different locations on the dome a parade of marchers —farmers in work clothes, mechanics carrying tools—came into view. Drawing closer, they were seen to represent the various ethnic groups that made up an American metropolis, and hence to comprise a kind of tableau of national unity. The music rose to a diapason, then subsided, the marching men vanished behind drifting clouds, and in a blaze of polarized light, the panorama of hope came to an end—its narrator, ironically enough, soon to become known in every American household with a radio for his grim nightly reports about the progress of World War II.

The designers had intended the Perisphere show to serve as a kind of crystallized vision of the Fair as a whole, a declaration that American democracy had within it the possibility of creating a life of modern abundance. There were, of course, other visions of the future abroad in the world of that time. The Fascists had their authoritarian state, the Soviets their collectivist paradise, each one purchasing order at the price of freedom. The Trylon and Perisphere theme center asserted a competing vision, one buoyed up on the wave of optimism generated by the 19th-century movement for progressive reform and reinforced by the modernist movement in the arts. It was a vision that combined enthusiasm about the possibilities inherent in science and technology with a Whitmanesque faith in the idea of democracy. The vision no doubt contained some contradictions, but it was potent stuff amid the surrounding international gloom. World War II broke out just as the Fair was completing its first summer. On September 1, 1939, Hitler, having signed his pact with Stalin a few days before, hurled his forces into Poland; two days later England and France reluctantly went to war. Once again, in Lord Grey's famous words, "the lights were going out all over Europe."

Maybe so, but across the Atlantic, the World's Fair was nothing if not luminous. The crowds who left the Perisphere and looked back at the largest globular structure ever built could see a shining world, apparently suspended in air on jets of red-, green-, and blue-colored water, an arrangement of mirrors on which the water played rendering the actual supporting columns invisible. At night, powerful lights projected moving cloud patterns on the surface of the sphere, creating the illusion that the building itself was revolving. With such a prospect before them, how could Americans not be optimistic?

ONE of the Fair's most perceptive critics, the architect Douglas Haskell, writing in *Architectural Record* in 1940, drew an interesting comparison between the New York Fair and the one taking place the same year in San Francisco. Haskell detected a certain paradox in the fact that the Western exhibit had been the one which produced "the rounded and harmonious achievement" while the East, in a reversal of traditional roles, "played the pioneer." He went on to say that "although New York's experimentalism sometimes went wide of producing a finished harmony, it did bring forth a wealth of new material."

If indeed the Fair fell short of achieving a "finished harmony," it was probably because the energies it released were too great for such an effect. One thing the planners did produce, however, was a comprehensive overall design. The Trylon and Perisphere served as the center of a wheel with the leading avenues and malls acting as spokes. Thus, Constitution Mall—and the name of course was thematic—ran east to the Lagoon of Nations and the Court of Peace where one could visit the pavilions of foreign nations. Two other spokes, the Avenue of Patriots and the Avenue of Pioneers, served as routes for specially constructed Greyhound sightseeing buses which charged ten cents a ride, had seats facing outward, and boasted horns that played *The Sidewalks of New York*. Another spoke connected the Court of Communications, with its great pylons, to the Plaza of Light, with its Electrical Utilities building. World's Fair Boulevard led from the permanent aquatic amphitheater on Fountain Lake past the New York State exhibition building to the Transportation building across Grand Central Parkway.

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This geometrical arrangement accommodated the conceptual plan of the Fair, a division into seven thematic zones containing "focal" exhibits designed to represent the future possibilities of life in such areas as communications, public health, science and education, and transportation. A seventh zone, the 280-acre amusement park on the shores of Fountain Lake, served no educational purpose whatever, but proved so successful that it was enlarged during the Fair's second year. Here the public took a breather from more didactic pursuits and enjoyed such attractions as Billy Rose's Aquacade, Frank Buck's "Bring-'em-Back Alive" Jungleland, Admiral Byrd's Penguin Island, the Dance of the Doves starring Gypsy Rose Lee, and a new drink called the Zombie, which was served in glasses a foot tall and was supposed to be so potent that only one was allowed to a customer.

The Fair's layout did not meet with unqualified approval. Some critics argued that good design need not necessarily adhere to "neoclassic" principles of logic; others felt that the rigidly geometrical arrangement contradicted the idea of dynamic growth that was supposed to be the theme of the Fair. Defenders of the layout countered that the very clarity of the plan was in its way a creative statement, dramatizing the Fair's emergence—via a designer's drawing board—out of what had previously been a deserted swampland.

INTERESTING as these arguments were, they had very little to do with the energy and variety that visitors actually experienced at the Fair. The overall design may have been evident to someone looking at a blueprint, but a visitor strolling along one or another of the Fair's avenues was not likely to be aware of it. Perhaps his attention was caught by some of the players who cavorted along the boulevards, singing, dancing, juggling, playing the banjo, and attracting crowds wherever they went. Or perhaps he was watching one of the lavish fireworks displays or sound-and-light shows that had been devised for the public's entertainment by the ebullient Grover Whalen, New York's official greeter, who was also president of the Fair corporation. People came for the spectacle, heeding the advice of Joseph Wood Krutch in the *Nation* to avoid "buildings given large inclusive titles" and immerse themselves in the panorama as a whole.

The buildings themselves were constructed in a variety of styles within the general guidelines that had been laid down by the board of design. Art Deco, the International Style, Beaux-Arts moderne, were all represented, as was the idea—deriving from the *architecture parlante* of late 18th-century France—that a building should immediately announce its function. Thus, the Marine Transportation building declared itself by means of a huge pair of ocean liner bows and a 150-foot mast; the Aviation building consisted of a conically-shaped hall suggesting a wind tunnel or vast hangar; the Cosmetics building looked like a powder box. A giant igloo housed the Carrier Corporation air-conditioning exhibit, and the RCA building was shaped like a gigantic radio tube. To top it all off, the National Cash Register pavilion had a huge cash register on its roof which continually kept track of attendance figures. Apart from such visual puns, there was also a marvelous proliferation of towers, domes, and spirals spreading along the avenues, all projecting the same cumulative message: art and architecture had joined forces to celebrate a new age of technology. It was not the heavy power of iron and coal that was being celebrated this time around but a new era of electricity and flight.

THE immense impact of this new technology on American life could not have been foreseen in 1940. But much of what viewers were seeing, and marveling at, for the first time as they took the guided tour through the spectacular General Motors Futurama show did actually come to pass, and within a short time: superhighways, high-powered automobiles, and mass air travel. And what was true of the General Motors exhibit was true of exhibits throughout the Fair, in scores of displays like the one at the Eastman Kodak building, where mass high-tech color photography and three-dimensional polaroid photography were predicted for the first time or the one at Westinghouse Electric, where a gigantic voice-activated robot (named Elektro) performed a variety of tasks to the delight of spectators. Another device which excited a great deal of comment was an ingeniously-fashioned contrivance for keeping an isolated chicken heart alive and pumping. Developed by Charles Lindbergh and a French scientist named Alexis Carrell, it prefigured developments like organ transplants and artificial hearts that have transformed 20th-century medicine.

Displays like these proclaimed that a better tomorrow was within reach—not just anyone's tomorrow but an American tomorrow, democratic and streamlined. An unabashed expression of American nationalism, the Fair commemorated the 150th anniversary of Washington's inauguration, and induced President Roosevelt himself to preside at the laying of the cornerstone of the United States Government building. More eloquent than ceremonies like these, however, were the two time capsules lying buried in the fairground in an area not far from the Du Pont exhibition ("Better things for better living through chemistry") surrounded by low stone benches and identified by a round granite marker. The capsules, which contained such representative artifacts of American civilization as cameras, radios, combs, needles and thread, a telephone, and so on, had been sunk into their subterranean vaults on September 23, 1938 with instructions to posterity for raising them again on September 23, 6938. In a way, they constituted the very heart of the Fair, assuming as they did that American civilization would not only still matter five thousand years hence, but would be the basis for the world of the future.

The Fair's optimism transcended depression and war. The brilliance of the exhibits seemed to augur, if only implicitly, a new American world order, America as the world's

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future. Almost explicitly it opposed the declining British empire as well as the ascending new orders of Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia.

NOT every exhibit at the Fair, to be sure, shared the American dream of 1939. Several of the foreign pavilions among those clustered at the Court of Peace proclaimed quite different visions of the future.

Nazi Germany had no pavilion at the Fair, but the one representing Mussolini's Italy was especially brilliant, with its synthesis of the classical architecture of ancient Rome and the modernism of 20th-century Italy. What struck the eye first was the building's colonnaded front, surmounted by a huge tower that formed the pedestal for a statue of the goddess Roma. Once inside, the visitor encountered displays of scientific and technological achievements as well as a shimmering array of manufactured goods that produced an impression both of elegance and of extreme modernity.

This impression was strengthened by Italy's entry to the Transportation exhibit elsewhere at the Fair —several cars from a luxury passenger train designed to achieve speeds of 100 miles an hour. Sleek of outline and fashioned of gleaming red metal, they were as impressive an example of industrial modernism as anything at the Fair. They were also an unmistakable political metaphor: Italian Fascism here declared that it had its face toward the future and was speeding toward a second Roman empire. The metaphor was reinforced by a giant statue of Il Duce himself, in the pavilion's hall of honor, with the empire outlined in maps of copper and marble.

If the dominant note of the Italian pavilion was speed, that of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was bulk. Inside the ponderous building, paintings, sculpture, and bas reliefs proclaimed—in heavy "boy-meets-tractor" socialist-realism fashion—the achievements of the Soviet system. There was a life-sized reproduction of the famous Moscow subway, cleverly designed with mirrors so that it looked longer and larger than it actually was.

The façade was divided into eleven sections, each ornamented to represent one of the Soviet socialist republics. A central tower was topped by a huge statue of a thick-legged, thick-necked Soviet worker brandishing a red star that gleamed in the night. This made the Soviet pavilion the tallest structure at the Fair—with the single exception of the Trylon—a fact with ideological implications lost on no one. Its overall impression was of a massively heroic structure that had obviously been designed to impress and intimidate.

The Japanese pavilion contained what must have been the single most remarkable object of the entire Fair: a giant Liberty Bell made almost entirely of cultured pearls. But apart from this singular achievement, the most striking thing about the building was its reticence. It displayed no aeronautical or scientific achievements and made no claims to empire, despite the fact that Japan had occupied Manchura in 1931, and had eventually undertaken a full-scale attack on China itself. It had built up its navy and air force, sunk an American gunboat on the Yangtze, and engaged in skirmishes against the British. Yet its pavilion was modeled on an ancient Shinto shrine, complete with dwarf shrubbery, a tiny arching bridge, and guides in silk kimonos who gave periodic demonstrations of the Japanese tea ceremony.

This was not the world of tomorrow but the world of yesterday, an effort to contradict the widespread sense that the Japanese were barbarians. The pavilion sought to root Japanese claims to power and empire in the ancient—and, one was invited to think, superior—cultural traditions of that mysterious island. In the year 1940, it is doubtful that many visitors to the Fair found those claims persuasive.

ONE of the pavilions most admired in the early days of the Fair had been Poland's, with its rectangular golden tower, modern and light, rising above the main entrance. Inside, one found memorabilia of ancient Polish kings as well as examples of Polish science, technology, and the arts, and even a fashion show featuring the latest Warsaw styles. The emphasis was on Polish democratic traditions and the important role Poland would play in the Europe of the future. But the Polish pavilion was gone by the second year of the Fair. So was the Finnish pavilion, which had closed to the strains of *Finlandia* following Finland's defeat at the hands of Stalin.

Nor did the Soviet pavilion survive for long. After the Hitler-Stalin pact and the invasion of Poland, the whole structure was pulled down and carted away. By the summer of 1940, it had been replaced by a bandstand.

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Books in Review

Letting the City Down

THE RISE AND FALL OF NEW YORK CITY. By ROGER STARR. *Basic Books. 272 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by LESLIE LENKOWSKY

A DECADE after it began, New York City's fiscal crisis appears to have eased. After going to the brink of bankruptcy (and, some say, technically into it), New York is again able to obtain credit in the financial markets. The loans once secured by desperately needed federal guarantees are being repaid ahead of schedule. Although built upon the usual optimistic assumptions, the city's budget looks reasonably sound and new public employees are now being hired after a long period of layoffs and attrition. While the price of the last decade is visible in the subways, streets, and elsewhere, this year's mayoral election is unlikely to have the life-or-death overtones of previous ones.

Yet as Roger Starr writes in *The Rise and Fall of New York City*, the possibility that New York may soon face another financial emergency should not be underestimated. Despite the last decade's creative and sometimes heroic efforts to curb the city's spending and borrowing habits, a change in the political weather could readily bring on a new round of credit-straining excesses. The reason, says Starr, in a bold and insightful analysis reminiscent of the classic urban sociology of Max Weber and Louis Wirth, is that the real crisis facing New Yorkers was moral more than it was fiscal, and little about the last ten years suggests that it has been solved.

The conventional interpretation of New York City's problems takes a different view. It holds that they were the result of good intentions, too eagerly pursued. In trying to help the poor, immigrants, and other groups that came to New York in search of opportunity, its leaders made commitments to a wide range of public services, the like of which existed in no other city. Eventually, the costs became too great because—here analysts differ—the manufacturing base declined, federal aid programs were curtailed, middle-class taxpayers moved to the suburbs, municipal unions became too powerful, or other factors intervened largely beyond anyone's control or expectation. Through a variety of fiscal tricks, the services were kept going, but ultimately the day of reckoning arrived. Nevertheless, according to this standard view, if their conduct was imprudent, New York's leaders at least could not be faulted for their ideals.

Starr challenges this notion by arguing that at the heart of New York City's crisis was, in fact, the reluctance of its leaders to make moral distinctions. In providing public services, no need was deemed unworthy, no behavior more deserving of reproach than of help. Hence, as the numbers of illegitimate births and single-parent families rose, as crime rates increased, as classrooms became more disorderly, and as low-income housing was vandalized, public and private leaders and opinion-setters usually watched tolerantly, not willing to take steps to impose "their values" on other groups and sometimes even justifying activities and programs that were causing great harm. Deprived of the kind of moral guidance that other migrants to New York received, many of the poor, and especially of the black poor, failed to acquire the traits necessary for upward mobility and instead became even more dependent upon the public services that were being so generously supplied by the city.

Since financing all these programs required industrial and middle-class taxpayers, New York politicians, says Starr, created a variety of subsidies for housing, transportation, and other items to keep such taxpayers in the city. This effort was bound to be fruitless, partly because the subsidies themselves cost a great deal of money. (The fiscal crisis was, in fact, triggered by the credit problems of an agency that underwrote moderate-income housing projects.) A tendency to disparage people who owned businesses or property as being insufficiently public-spirited for wanting to make a bit of profit also did not help. In any case, the growing disorder among the poor, and the apparent unwillingness of the city's leaders to do anything about it, could hardly be kept from alienating everyone else.

As a result, in contrast to its halcyon post-World War II days, New York has become a less attractive, uncivil, demoralized place except in enclaves, mostly in Manhattan, where the relatively small proportion of people who set the tone of its cultural and political life live and work. Being affluent, they are more interested in doing good than in creating wealth. Being successful, they care more for self-expression than for self-discipline. Being independent, they want others to be free of conventional restraints as well. In short, they subscribe to the sorts of beliefs associated with contemporary liberalism. The values and politics of these "elites," not merely the lack of restraints on government growth, are what led New York to the edge of bankruptcy in 1975 and could do so again.

TO ANYONE who has read the traditional writings on the culture of cities, this argument will sound familiar. Most observers, though usually not so extreme as Thomas Jefferson, who looked upon "great cities as pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man," have expected urban life to take a high toll on social norms. To Max Weber, the city was a place of liberation from feudal ties, governed only by impersonal (and hence, less secure) commercial and

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bureaucratic relations. To anthropologists like Robert Redfield and Oscar Lewis, it was where folk cultures were transformed into secular ones, often producing social disorganization as well. To Louis Wirth and the "Chicago school," the city was marked by so many kinds of functional differences that deviance was, in effect, the rule. Whether they felt the individual freedom it provided was a blessing or a curse, few writers on the development of the city have failed to appreciate the difficulty it created for maintaining a decent level of social order.

Albeit not in so many words, Starr has ingeniously revived this classic perspective as a way of understanding the problems besetting today's cities. In their reluctance to assert moral leadership, he suggests, New York's elites (and their counterparts elsewhere) have behaved like quintessential urbanites. Valuing individualism above all else, they have become unmindful of the social rules needed to enable diverse people to live together. By infusing politics with a cosmopolitan outlook, they have torn it from the moorings of group or neighborhood interests that made it succeed. And as all this was occurring, advances in public health were making for a larger population, and a growing squeamishness about punishing lawbreakers stripped the city of some of its former defenses. Ironically, Starr's provocative analysis implies that the emergence of New York as the world's premier city, the epitome of urban life, also sowed the moral seeds responsible for its subsequent miseries.

STARR possesses a wealth of knowledge about New York's history and politics, which he puts to great use in charting its decline. Still, one wishes that he had more to say about just who the current elites are and why they seem so indifferent to the fate of their own city. To take just one example, *The Rise and Fall of New York City* contains practically no discussion of the city's powerful publishing and broadcasting industry, an omission made understandable but no less regrettable by the author's current occupation as a member of the editorial board of the New York *Times*. Nor does the book adequately explain why New York's more conservative elites—bankers, clergymen, merchants, developers, and the like—so easily put on (or failed to resist) the new anti-judgmental fashions. Such an account, however, would call for an assessment of American culture—and in particular of American liberalism—much broader than the specific (though probably trend-setting) case of New York City.

Whether new elites who are urban without being urbane may emerge, as Starr hopes, is anyone's guess. Starr does single out Mayor Koch—a self-styled "liberal with sanity"—as a possible prototype, while noting that Koch's approval of middle-class attitudes on economic issues is combined with support for less orthodox personal behavior (as in his position on gay rights). Though New York would undoubtedly have been worse off without him, many of Koch's policies remain flawed by attitudes not unlike those of his predecessors. In any case, notes Starr, Koch has yet to displace the established liberal elites, of which he was once a leader, but who now oppose him and stand ready to return to business as usual as soon as he leaves office.

PERHAPS the solution lies not just in new leaders but in new social institutions. If modern urban life, aided by contemporary liberalism, inevitably tends to dull moral sensibility, corrupt politics, and give rise to social disorder, then a return to the village—or at least its nearest urban equivalent—may be called for. Indeed, in New York as well as many other large cities, something of the sort is already well advanced. This new "de-urbanization" takes the form of neighborhood-development associations, anti-crime block watches, community school boards, and the like. While hardly a substitute for the full range of municipal activities, they do afford city dwellers the opportunity to set standards and bring some degree of control into those areas of urban life with which they are most directly concerned.

Such arrangements are not cure-alls. If they lack valid social ties, they may only exacerbate the disorder of urban life, as the community-control experiments of the 1960's showed. Nor, as Starr points out in connection with proposals for enterprise zones, would much be gained if economic incentives improved but hostile attitudes toward entrepreneurship did not. For some groups, such as lower-class blacks, urbanization may already have taken so great a toll that virtually nothing can restore a sense of cohesion (though even that may change). And many problems can only be addressed citywide: subways and streets must connect across neighborhood boundaries while jails and shelters for the homeless are not likely to be eagerly welcomed within them. As long as large numbers of strangers live closely together, cities are not going to be merely collections of urban villages.

But the impact of urban morality need not extend into every aspect of life. Outside liberal enclaves, more traditional standards can sometimes prevail, with considerable human and financial benefits. Thus, the Koreans and other newly arrived ethnic groups, who have so far managed to preserve the best of the old culture while acquiring the skills of the new, have been so successful that they are scarcely mentioned by Starr. Is it too much to believe that more settled residents also have social strengths that can be better tapped to achieve legitimate goals? And that the leaders of New York and other cities can devise ways of doing so?

In New York, Philadelphia, the District of Columbia, and other cities, some encouraging signs can be found. Nonetheless, as long as the reigning political philosophy denies the legitimacy of upholding traditional standards, little will really change. New York's "moral crisis" will eventually engender another fiscal one. If so, thanks to Roger Starr's book, which comes closer than any other to the truth of what happened the first time, the city's elites will not be able to escape blame by claiming their intentions were good.

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Neorevisionism

THE LIBERAL MIND IN A CONSERVATIVE AGE: AMERICAN INTELLECTUALS IN THE 1940's AND 1950's. By RICHARD H. PELLS. *Harper & Row. 468 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES NUECHTERLEIN

ARGUMENTS about the past are almost always arguments about the present as well. Disputes ostensibly rooted in disagreement as to the nature of historical evidence often turn out to be located instead in conflicting current sensibilities. Thus when "traditional" and "revisionist" historians carried on intense debates in the 1960's and 1970's about the origins of the cold war and the meaning of McCarthyism they could be seen to be engaged in the conduct of contemporary political warfare by other means.

Political tempers have cooled to some degree in recent years, and sanguine observers have argued that we are now in a post-revisionist era in which the old polarities have been reconciled and it is now possible to transcend sterile ideological debates and reach new grounds of tranquil scholarly agreement. Yet if Richard H. Pells's recent book on postwar American intellectuals is any example, the post-revisionist consensus represents less a new level of understanding than a more sophisticated restatement of the established revisionist argument. As such, it will not lay old arguments to rest; it will simply reignite them at a more complicated level of controversy.

It must be acknowledged that the analysis offered in *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* represents a clear advance over some of the crude positions put forward by early revisionists. Pells does not make the United States the originator of the cold war (though he is critical of Harry Truman's diplomacy); he does not excuse or minimize Stalin's crimes; he does not charge postwar intellectuals with a massive failure of will or with gross complacency; and he does not (at least for the most part) treat the views of those with whom he disagrees in distorted, dismissive, or reductionist fashion. Indeed, Pells is an intelligent and industrious researcher, and his book offers a good deal of useful and thoughtful social/cultural history.

Yet Pells has written, in my view, a deeply flawed book, one whose political analysis does not make sense in its own terms and whose larger concern—the duty of intellectuals—receives surprisingly superficial treatment. The result is a work that for all the honorable effort that went into it frustrates the reader and fails to advance our understanding of an era that is past due for careful reassessment.

The original revisionist argument attacked the postwar intellectuals for indulging in an uncritical

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American celebration and for succumbing to government-inspired anti-Communist hysteria ("red-baiting"). Pells appears at first glance implicitly to repudiate this view. He declares his admiration for the intellectuals of the 50's; indeed, he argues in his preface that "they offered more provocative and imaginative criticism of their society than one can find in the manifestoes of either the 1930's or the 1960's."

As PELLS's argument proceeds, however, a curious transformation occurs. The revisionist perspective, ushered out the front door, returns through the back. (Pells, it should be noted, does not deal directly in his text with the historiographical disputes concerning the era. It is necessary to do so here in order to put his argument in proper perspective.) It turns out that the rehabilitation of postwar liberalism rests not on repudiation of revisionist distortions concerning what was at stake in cold-war America; it rests rather on recognition that a number of liberal intellectuals offered more in the way of a dissenting view of their society than has previously been recognized.

Pells shares much of the revisionist world view, if in diluted form. He is sympathetic (though distantly so) to Henry Wallace and his criticism of Truman's anti-Soviet policy; he chides liberals for enlisting on the American side in the cold war; and he thinks that postwar intellectuals who painted a positive view of American values and institutions (e.g., Arthur Schlesinger, Lionel Trilling, Reinhold Niebuhr, Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Boorstin, and Oscar Handlin) turned themselves thereby into "ideologues of the American Way." He reserves his approval for those—including David Riesman, John Kenneth Galbraith, William Whyte, Paul Goodman, Dwight Macdonald, Louis Hartz, and C. Wright Mills—who took a more critical view of American conditions and a more skeptical view toward the cold war. (Hannah Arendt, whom he also praises, is a special case.)

What is puzzling here is that Pells reaches neorevisionist conclusions from decidedly nonrevisionist premises. He is no apologist for Stalinism, and he explicitly recognizes that aggressive and antagonistic Soviet behavior in the postwar era made anti-Communism a natural, virtually inescapable, policy. But if that is so, then why the petty quibbling against intellectuals who supported American cold-war strategy, especially since, as Pells himself grants, those same liberals reserved the right (a right they often exercised) to quarrel with the tactical implementation of the nation's foreign policy? And why, given postwar American prosperity, stability, and freedom, the superior and belittling attitude toward those who chose to emphasize not what was wrong with their society but what, in contrast to alternatives elsewhere, made it seem humane and attractive?

THIS perversity of political analysis, bordering on incoherence, stems in part from Pells's failure to reconcile conflicting elements in his own ideological framework. It stems as well, however, from his curiously narrow view of the role of the intellectual. The social critic best performs his function, according to Pells, when he does what his title most literally suggests: criticize. Pells apparently believes that the intellectual can only exercise his autonomy and independence by assuming an adversarial stance toward his society; he is, virtually by definition, a dissenter. Given this view, it follows naturally that those intellectuals who questioned cold-war assumptions and exposed the failures of American society fulfilled their vocation, while those who defended official policy and looked with approval on the achievements of American civilization acted, not necessarily irresponsibly or shamefully, but with insufficient regard for their calling.

But surely there are other, less restrictive, views of the intellectual's public duty. Surely, in fact, the social critic should be concerned in the first instance neither with dissent nor affirmation but with understanding. *That* is the intellectual's responsibility: to bring to bear on public affairs as much comprehensive knowledge and wisdom as is in him, without regard for the effects of his views either on official or majority opinion or on those who oppose that opinion. What he does with whatever truths he manages to capture will depend on the substance of the truths discerned and the circumstances of the occasion. Pells to the contrary notwithstanding, there is no virtue in dissent for its own sake; there is virtue only in being at all times one's own person.

PELLS's political inconsistencies and his analytical blinders lead him most into trouble in his treatment of McCarthyism, an incendiary topic to which he gives extended but quite inadequate attention. McCarthyism in his view preceded the advent on the national scene of the notorious Senator from Wisconsin who could not distinguish among liberals, social democrats, and Communists. McCarthyism to Pells is the whole anti-Communist impulse of the postwar era, and it takes in not just security checks and loyalty oaths grown out of control or the excesses of congressional investigating committees but such items as "the trials of Alger Hiss, Communist party leaders, and the Rosenbergs," the 1948 presidential campaign "in which liberals accused Henry Wallace of being a spokesman for Moscow," and "the labor movement's expulsion of its Communist-dominated unions." Given this definition of McCarthyism, there is no distinction to be made between irresponsible red-baiting and fundamental opposition to the Communist enterprise. By collapsing virtually all anti-Communism into McCarthyism, Pells forecloses proper understanding of his subject.

A careful examination of the postwar era would no doubt disclose instances where liberals acted less nobly than they might later have wished or with a less scrupulous concern for civil liberties than they should have shown, but Pells insists on drawing his indictment more broadly than that. The heart of McCarthyism lay, he says, in the ideology of the cold war, and by subscribing to that ideology liberal intellectuals made it impossible for themselves to keep their intended balance between the McCarthyites

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on the one hand and the Stalinists on the other. The liberals' fundamental problem was that "they despise[d] the Left more than they feared the Right." They did not really like McCarthyism, Pells concedes, but in the end "they reinforced its assumptions and helped refine its methods because they detested Communism even more."

Not all intellectuals performed badly in Pells's eyes. There were some heroes—like Henry Steele Commager, I. F. Stone, Mary McCarthy, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, and Michael Harrington—who "resisted not simply the tactics of but the rationale for McCarthyism." Such people fought the red scare in a variety of ways, but common to them all was a fundamental refusal to have any part in the anti-Communist crusade. In that act of refusal, Pells argues, these men and women behaved "like genuinely free intellectuals when it counted most." (It is striking that Pells, who subjects the behavior of the anti-Communist liberals to careful ideological scrutiny, does not bother to inquire whether the refusal to cooperate in the anti-Communist crusade had its own ideological roots.)

Once again, Pells's analysis is perplexing. Like the original revisionists, he sees McCarthyism as an extension ("however distorted") of the liberals' own "militant anti-Communism." Unlike them, however, he does not pretend that there was no reason for reasonable people to become anti-Communists. Yet in the end he condemns the liberal intellectuals for acting on the logic of their political analysis. Pells could make a case, however arguable, if he wanted simply to maintain that liberals overreacted to the Communist threat and subscribed too enthusiastically to cold-war doctrines (and he does, it should be noted, make some telling criticisms of liberal behavior in specific cases), but he seems rather to be bringing into question the very anti-Communist impulse itself. And that, even on Pells's own terms, simply does not make sense.

If we are ever truly to reach a post-revisionist consensus on the postwar era, it will have to be with the help of historians who have mastered the complex ideological cross-currents of the period. Richard Pells has not mastered them; he has instead become their victim.

Modernity & the Jews

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE JEWS. By CALVIN GOLDSCHEIDER and ALAN ZUCKERMAN. *University of Chicago Press. 279 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

THE Bible characterizes the Jews as "a people that dwells apart," but Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman will have none of that. As social scientists engaged in the study of Jewish life, they take it for granted that Jewish existence is shaped by the exact same forces that shape group life in general. Moreover, they insist that conditions prevailing in the larger society play the key role in defining even the internal Jewish situation. Working from these premises, Goldscheider and Zuckerman here put forward a full-scale revisionist analysis of the "effects of modernization on Jews."

By any measure, the changes that have occurred to Jews in the modern period are monumental. One thinks immediately of the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel, events marking, respectively, the eclipse of European Jewry and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty after a hiatus of nearly two millennia. Hardly any less important is the emergence of the United States as a great center of Jewish life, containing the largest Jewish population in the world. And Goldscheider and Zuckerman point to the following "staggering alterations" as well:

> ...Religious denominations have appeared bringing Jewish prayers in a variety of languages and theologies in diverse modes of

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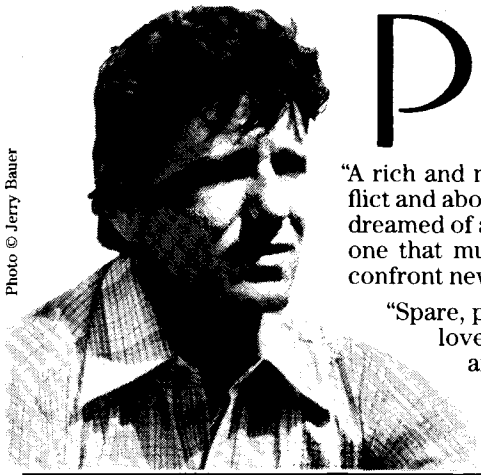

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> thought. . . . Jewish political movements have formed espousing socialist, Zionist, religious, and ethnic ideologies. . . . Jews have migrated across the globe.... From filling traditional roles as middlemen, merchants, and artisans, Jews moved into the salaried and professional classes. . . .

How is one to come to grips with the modern Jewish experience? Goldscheider and Zuckerman forcefully argue that it will not do to treat the various elements in isolation. Rather, they maintain, a mode of analysis is needed that will encompass the whole of the Jewish engagement with modernity. Their chosen instrument for this purpose is the concept of modernization itself, the "master theme of contemporary social science." Applying this theme, they systematically develop comparisons among Jewish communities over time and space. Indeed, in this regard *The Transformation of the Jews* is something of a *tour de force*.

Goldscheider and Zuckerman move as far back into the past as the traditional Jewish society of pre-modern Europe and as far forward into the present as the America and Israel of yesterday's newspaper headlines; naturally, they also speculate about the future. In their chapter on traditional Jewish society—a ubiquitous phenomenon on the European scene until the French Revolution ushered in the era of Jewish emancipation—they underscore two points: Jewish life was characterized by a high degree of isolation, and there was very extensive overlap among the elements of "family, religion, politics, social status, residence, and economic position." Needless to say, this made for a close-knit communal existence, with multiple bases for Jewish cohesion.

The whole of the modern Jewish experience, Goldscheider and Zuckerman make clear, represents the inexorable unfolding of a process—sometimes gradual, sometimes swift—by which Jews have been drawn out of their isolation and placed in a brave new world in which Jewish cohesiveness is anything but assured. The actual working out of that process is described by the authors in a series of chapters bearing such revealing titles as "Political Modernization: The Early Transformation of the Jewish Community"; "The Tempo and Intensity of Modernization: Assimilation or Transformation in Western Europe"; "Modernization in Large and Organized Jewish Communities: Comparing East and West Europe"; "Modernization and American Jews: Issues of Quantity and Quality"; and "Immigration and the Emergence of Israeli Society."

As Goldscheider and Zuckerman trace the course of the modern Jewish experience, certain key interpretative themes clearly emerge. One, already noted, is that the Jewish situation at every turn is largely a function of conditions prevailing in non-Jewish society; the latter both sets strict limits upon Jewish life and defines its possibilities. Thus, the whole process of Jewish modernization was set in motion when European nations, in the wake of the French Revolution, began to award citizenship to the alien Jews in their midst. Still other examples are Jewish occupational and educational patterns, which have consistently reflected the realities of available opportunities in the larger society.

A second point stressed by Goldscheider and Zuckerman is that modernization is not a completely new start. Rather, the "winds of change work on existing structures as they transform societies and the Jewish communities within them." Thus, "At any point in time, the characteristics of a Jewish community reflect the traits of an earlier period."

A third point has to do with the interrelatedness of all aspects of Jewish society and culture under the impact of modernization, which proves as powerful as it does because changes in any one dimension of Jewish life—demographic, economic, political, ideological, etc.—quickly translate into changes in all the others.

Finally, the authors underscore the notion that differences *among* Jewish communities at given points in time are to be explained by two factors: varying rates of modernization in the surrounding societies, and varying levels of cohesion within the communities themselves. Of course, the two are very much linked, in that an increased measure of Jewish cohesiveness will mitigate the impact of modernization, and vice versa. All this helps to account for the striking differences between the Jewries of Eastern and Western Europe in the 19th century.

BUT what about Jewish cohesion itself? What accounts for variations in the degree of its potency over time and space? Goldscheider and Zuckerman's own position on this matter is clear-cut: "The level of cohesion reflects the level of communal interaction. The more spheres in which the members of an ethnic group interact frequently and without conflict—residence, work, school, politics, family, social organization—the higher the level of cohesion." Seen from this vantage point, assimilation denotes a "random pattern of interaction, where Jews are no more likely to interact with each other than with non-Jews." Maximum cohesion, by contrast, bespeaks a situation in which Jews "interact exclusively and without conflict with other Jews."

Perhaps surprisingly, Goldscheider and Zuckerman are convinced that modernization allows for a significant degree of Jewish cohesion. They do not, to be sure, deny the obvious: that modernization has taken a fearful toll of the traditional pattern of Jewish existence. Indeed, the bulk of *The Transformation of the Jews* is given over to a sober reckoning with this very fact. Nonetheless, they argue that modernization also serves to reinforce Jewish cohesion by promoting the development of new modes of Jewish association. Their outstanding example is Israel itself, which is nothing less than a total Jewish society. Yet even in the Diaspora, particularly in the United States, Goldscheider and Zuckerman observe strong associational ties. They state:

> Residential clustering and family cohesion remain high among Jews in cities and metropolitan areas. The high rates of migra-

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tion among young and older Jews do not necessarily obliterate ties to communities of origin or destination. New communities have sprouted and older ones have been invigorated by these migrations. The occupational and educational concentrations of Jews have crystallized and have become their most conspicuous feature. As specific jobs and educational levels of Jews have altered over time, processes of occupational and educational reconcentration have taken place.

According to the authors, even intermarried Jews fit into this picture in a positive way:

> Many intermarried Jews take part in Jewish communal life. Many, if not most, have Jewish friends and family connections. Most retain residential, occupational, and educational bonds with other Jews. Many non-Jews married to Jews develop bases of communal contacts and are part of the Jewish community.

All in all, then, as self-declared Jewish "survivalists," Goldscheider and Zuckerman find they have reason to be upbeat about the future.

The Transformation of the Jews provides a needed corrective in several areas pertaining to the study of Jewish life. Certainly, it is valuable to be reminded that Jewish communities have never existed in isolation; that outside forces always play a central role in determining the Jewish condition; that all aspects of Jewish society and culture are inextricably linked; that the structural component of Jewish life is of far-reaching significance; and—most importantly—that modernization need not be synonymous with assimilation. Regrettably, however, Goldscheider and Zuckerman, in their revisionist zeal, seriously overstate their case.

One way in which *The Transformation of the Jews* differs from other studies of the modern Jewish experience is in its complete lack of interest in Jewish ideas and Jewish values. Goldscheider and Zuckerman do touch upon these matters, but only long enough to dismiss them as of no consequence. "For most Jews, most of the time," they maintain, "ideologies and beliefs justify decisions reached on other grounds." The conclusions to which this position drives them are sometimes quite absurd. Thus, they write that the rise of Reform Judaism in 19th-century Germany was nothing other than a reflection of "employment problems particular to German [Jewish] university students." In the same fashion, they assert that Lithuania became a great center of Torah study because of an "absence of alternative opportunities in jobs and education for men."

So enamored are they of the argument that trends in non-Jewish society are what determine the course of Jewish development that the authors are unwilling even to consider the possibility that some inner dynamic lies at the heart of Jewish historical experience; to them, this smacks of paro-

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chialism and special pleading. Yet is it any more objective to maintain that Jewish thought, belief, and value structures count for nothing as dynamic elements in the Jewish situation? Clearly, what is needed is a more balanced perspective, one that gives proper due to both inner and outer sources of change.

The need for balance also applies to Goldscheider and Zuckerman's upbeat analysis of the current American Jewish situation. The authors have made a signal contribution in pointing out the complexities of Jewish life in the United States, and in rejecting the notion that American Jews are about to disappear. But part of the very complexity of the American Jewish situation has to do with the issue of the quality of Jewish life, and about this Goldscheider and Zuckerman have precious little to say. The reason is simple: their analytical scheme, stressing structural elements, does not permit them to come to grips with the qualitative side of, for example, Jewish religious and cultural expression. Yet without discussing these factors one simply cannot reach an understanding of the American Jewish experience, much less assess its prospects.

Nuclear Strategy

COUNSELS OF WAR. By GREGG HERKEN. *Knopf. 409 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID BLAIR

WHAT should a reader look for in a popular history of U.S. nuclear strategy? First, a clear explanation of the contents and origins of alternative strategic theories, with accurate definitions of the jargon which professional strategists, like any professionals, use as a shorthand and which is now the common language of the national debate. What are "minimum deterrence," "extended deterrence," "mutual assured destruction," "counterforce," "first strike," "second strike," "first use," etc.? Then the reader should hope to learn how the strategies are related to capabilities of specific weapons and to the geopolitical problems of the U.S. and NATO. Finally, he might want some biographical vignettes of the civilian strategists—many of them mathematicians, economists, or physicists who developed their pioneering analyses at the Rand Corporation during the 1950's and subsequently held high positions in the Pentagon.

Counsels of War, the latest entry in this booming market, raises expectations of being just such a book. The publisher's blurb touts Gregg Herken's interviews with "more than sixty people—including three former secretaries of defense, four ambassadors, seventeen nuclear strategists, and twenty-two atomic scientists." This kind of lightly footnoted journalistic "history" has the potential value of telling stories that would have to remain untold were we to insist on the documentary standards of professional historians. But it asks an extraordinary degree of trust from readers, who cannot check many of its sources. Herken's astounding number of factual errors quickly dissipate that trust. Although its author taught history at Yale for the last six years, *Counsels of War* reads like a term paper by an underclassman who is confused about some of the most basic concepts of strategic theory, familiar with a few secondary sources, and very eager to please a "concerned" professor.

Even Herken's anecdotes are often untrue. For example, he tells us at least five separate times about a group of strategists he calls "the Risborough alumni." Charles Hitch, Alain Enthoven, and Henry Rowen supposedly first worked together during World War II in the English village of Risborough on a project to gauge statistically the effects of Allied bombing of Germany. Then they worked together at Rand in the 1950's and in the Pentagon under Robert McNamara. The only problem with this mildly interesting story is that, of the three, neither Enthoven nor Rowen was at Risborough, as Herken could have found out simply by asking them and as he should have suspected had he bothered to check their ages (in 1943 Rowen was eighteen and Enthoven twelve).

Herken's errors only worsen when he turns to more substantial matters. He writes that "the number of nuclear warheads in the nation's strategic arsenal had increased fivefold from when McNamara was Defense Secretary" to 1974. The facts are otherwise. Total strategic warheads (offensive and defensive) fell from about 14,000 in 1965 to about 9,000 in 1970, and rose again to about 12,500 in 1974. Total U.S. offensive strategic warheads did approximately double during this period (they did not increase fivefold), but their total megatonnage was cut approximately in half.

Much of the book's discussion of strategic theories can only confound Herken's intended audience of readers unfamiliar with the subject. Typically he discusses an issue for a paragraph or two from one point of view then returns to it chapters later espousing the exact opposite argument, without seeming to realize that he has shifted. Critical terms are left undefined; worse, when Herken does define a term, he is often amazingly befuddled about it.

For example, the phrase "extended deterrence" properly refers to the idea that American strategic nuclear forces can deter a Soviet nuclear attack aimed solely at Western Europe or the other major allies. The argument that even minimized strategic U.S. forces would have the capability to "extend" this nuclear guarantee is an essential part of the minimum-deterrence theories propounded by those strategists Herken sees as heroes. But without ever defining the term, he nonsensically writes that "extended deterrence" somehow means going "beyond deterrence."

IN THE book's deep morass, Herken does assert a major theme—that we are in the midst of a dangerous "arms race"—which he buttresses with two arguments common to those who want to cut U.S. defense spending drastically. The first is that the U.S. has striven for

DAVID BLAIR, *who reviewed Strobe Talbott's* Deadly Gambits *in our February issue, is a policy analyst at Pan Heuristics in Los Angeles.*

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a "first-strike" capability, compelling the Soviets to increase their forces just to defend themselves. The second is that the U.S. has persistently overestimated the Soviet threat and thus built more forces than we need; again, the Soviets can only follow suit. Both these hackneyed myths were exploded long ago.

The "first-strike, second-strike" analysis of deterrence argues that any U.S. deterrent force must be able to survive a surprise Soviet first strike specifically designed to destroy that force. Then this U.S. deterrent must be able to carry out a second strike against Soviet targets. This concept is crucial to *all* theories of deterrence, from "minimum deterrence," which says the second strike only needs to destroy cities, to the various analyses which argue that the defender's second strike must be capable of destroying the attacker's conventional or nuclear military forces.

Herken's discussion of this issue is hopelessly muddled. On the one hand, he writes as if the U.S. did not need to retain sufficient forces to ride out a Soviet surprise attack. For example, he criticizes a 1953 Rand basing study (which originated the "first-strike, second-strike" analysis by showing that the American strategic bomber force could be destroyed by a Soviet surprise attack) for "entirely miss[ing] the point that it was Russia's vulnerability to attack—not its own—that *properly* concerned the Air Force . . ." (emphasis added). That is, the U.S. properly need not worry about retaining a retaliatory force capable of surviving a Soviet first strike.

On the other hand, Herken takes very solemnly indeed *Soviet* professions of worry about a first strike by the U.S. He contends that the U.S. government has been trying to develop a first-strike capability that would preclude any Soviet response to an unprovoked initial American attack. There is simply no foundation in fact for such a contention. To reach it, Herken has to report half-truths, ignoring both the officially documented history of all postwar administrations *and* American behavior. He tells us, for instance, that "Public comments favorable to the idea [of preventive war] were expressed during the late 1940's or early 1950's by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Robert Carney, director of the Air War College Orville Anderson, and Navy Secretary Francis Matthews." He neglects to say that Anderson and Matthews were fired by President Truman for making these statements.

It is true that the U.S., since the establishment of NATO and at the insistence of its allies, has always reserved the option of "first use" of nuclear weapons to stop a Soviet conventional invasion of NATO if it cannot be stopped with non-nuclear weapons alone. As any freshman student of strategy should know, first use is a very different concept from that of a surprise, disarming first strike. Yet Herken does not define the two terms and manages to use them interchange-

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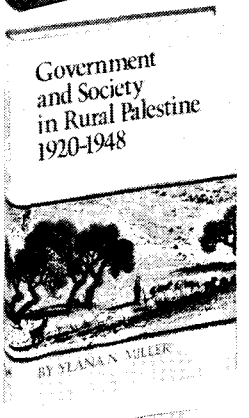

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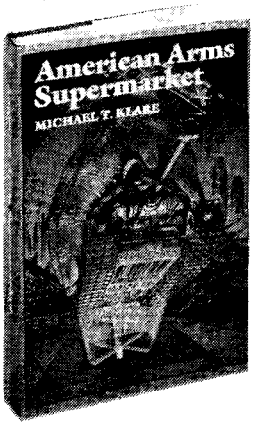

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ably, possibly because he never considers the need for NATO to counter Soviet aggression at a scale lower than the all-out destruction of U.S. cities.

HERKEN believes American arms decisions are based not on any reasonable calculation of threats posed by the Soviet Union but upon American paranoia and aggressiveness and upon lies made necessary by domestic politics. His chief illustrative instance is the so-called "missile gap"—the period from 1958 to 1961 when the U.S. overestimated the current and near-future size of the Soviet ICBM force. The truth is, however, that even in this period the total number of Soviet missiles constructed pretty much coincided with the number predicted. The Soviets had decided to build intermediate-range missiles (IRBM's) designed for attacking Europe rather than ICBM's for attacking the U.S.; if the U.S. overestimated Soviet ICBM's, it underestimated IRBM's. (This is one more instance where Herken's arguments depend on ignoring the Soviet threat to Europe.)

Contrary to Herken, moreover, the ruckus raised by John Kennedy's 1960 proclamations of a dangerous missile gap (followed by his administration's about-face in denying its existence) induced a persistent tendency for the U.S. not to overestimate but to *under*estimate future Soviet forces. Thus, during the 1960's even the upper bounds of the Secretary of Defense's official predictions of Soviet strategic forces were below the actual levels for 42 out of 51 estimates and the midpoints were too low 49 out of 51 times.

Underestimates of the Soviet threat were also integral to the official arguments for the 1972 SALT I treaty (though its proponents did not call for its repeal when their crucial predictions turned out to be grievously wrong). In a press conference upon signing the treaty, chief negotiator Gerard Smith said:

> There will be a commitment on their [the Soviets'] part not to build any more of these ICBM's that have concerned us over the years. That commitment will extend to not building such things as the SS-9's. . . .

True, the Soviets did not build more SS-9's. They did build even more potent "such things" as the heavy, multiple-warhead SS-18's and other new types of ICBM's along with very long range submarine-launched missiles. They thereby increased dramatically the threat to U.S. ICBM's and other forces—negating U.S. technical advantages which SALT advocates had predicted would offset Soviet numerical advantages. Readers will not learn from Herken of this or of the concomitant Soviet conventional build-up of the 1960's and 1970's.

ECHOING the rhetoric of the nuclear-freeze movement, Herken hails public "concern" which, he claims, can somehow take the place of expert analysis of our strategic options:

> [The] participation of the public in the strategic debate was explicitly discouraged by the government. . . . But two generations of the nuclear era have evidently changed this attitude on the part of the public, if not the government. "There is a realization," observed Paul Warnke, "that the experts don't have all the answers and possibly not any of the answers." . . . What strategist Robert Osgood once characterized as "the deference of the uninitiated, overawed by the secrets and rituals of the strategic priesthood," may be ending.

In fact, most strategic analyses are neither secret nor ritualistic. They are easily accessible to anyone willing to read the literature. Herken apparently did not think such reading necessary before he wrote his book.

Beyond Individualism?

HABITS OF THE HEART: INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMITMENT IN AMERICAN LIFE. By ROBERT N. BELLAH, RICHARD MADSEN, WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN, ANN SWIDLER, and STEVEN M. TIPTON. *University of California Press. 355 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM KRISTOL

DOES the title *Habits of the Heart* seem more appropriate for a popular romantic novel (or a made-for-television movie) than for a serious sociological study? If so—if we associate "habits of the heart" with personal romance rather than with social science or public philosophy—this would simply be grist for

WILLIAM KRISTOL *is assistant professor in the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.*

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Robert Bellah's mill, further evidence for his contention that "the language of individualism, the primary American language of self-understanding, limits the ways in which people think."

The phrase "habits of the heart" is borrowed from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville explains that he applies the term "mores" not only to what "might be called habits of the heart, but also to the different notions possessed by men, the various opinions current among them, and the sum of ideas that shape mental habits." Bellah also attempts to understand American "mores" in this broad sense. In order to discover "what resources Americans have for making sense of their lives, how they think about themselves and their society, and how their ideas relate to their actions," Bellah and his associates engaged in "conversations with ourselves, our ancestors, and several hundred of our fellow citizens." With the publication of their findings, they "intended to open a larger conversation with our fellow citizens" with an eye toward contributing to "transforming American culture." *Habits of the Heart* thus aspires to be at once a work of social science and a contribution to public philosophy—a work, indeed, after the example of Tocqueville, of "social science as public philosophy."

IT WOULD be unjust to criticize Bellah for falling short of the standard set by Tocqueville, since this simply puts Bellah in the company of every other student of America in the last century and a half. It would be churlish to harp too long on the issue of whether the Americans interviewed—about half of them Californians, a quarter therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and their clients, another quarter leftist political activists—are even loosely representative of the nation as a whole. It would be pointless to dilate upon the book's wooden earnestness which pervades even the reports of the interviews, the repetitiousness of the exposition, the preachiness of the advocacy, even the rather hackneyed character of the argument. All of this would simply suggest that a prominent sociologist and four colleagues, advised by a distinguished advisory committee, and supported by three foundations and the National Endowment for the Humanities, labored for several years and brought forth a mouse. But it is the particular character of this mouse, and the noises it makes when it squeaks, that may be of interest as revealing some of the habits of mind of one prominent stream of contemporary social science and public philosophy.

One might think that a work based primarily on interviews might be somewhat incoherent, but this is not a problem of *Habits of the Heart*. Quite the contrary; the interviews are cut and pasted to fit into a clear analytic framework. This was presumably made possible by the fact that, as Bellah acknowledges, he and his associates "sought

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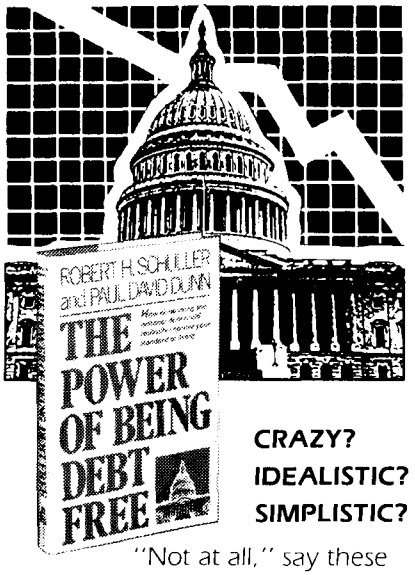

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to bring our preconceptions and questions" into the interviews, and that the story they tell is in any case "not just the story of those we interviewed. It is also our own." This allows Bellah to lay out his argument clearly, even schematically; it also means that we do not learn very much from all the stories the interviewees tell. They all amount to Bellah's own.

BELLAH'S story is straightforward, and for the most part unobjectionable. American culture consists of three central strands—the biblical, the republican, and the modern individualist. Individualism, always our "first language," has over the years become increasingly dominant, leaving the "self" ever more detached from social contexts or cultural traditions. Individualism flourishes in two modes: as the "utilitarian individualism" of a Benjamin Franklin that dominates our world of work, and as the "expressive individualism" of a Walt Whitman that we indulge in choosing "life-styles" while at leisure. The triumph of the somewhat uneasy alliance of utilitarian and expressive individualism has deprived us of a "framework within which to justify common values" or a language to explain our individual commitments — thereby rendering precarious both our common values and our individual commitments. As a result, American individualism "may have grown cancerous," "threatening the survival of freedom itself," to say nothing of our well-being as a society and as individuals.

This fundamental perspective underlies Bellah's discussion of a variety of aspects of American private life and public life—from marriage and the family to religion and civic associations. The discussion draws heavily on three dozen or so of the interviews done by Bellah's associates; but the interviews, and the analysis as a whole (with the partial exception of the chapter on therapy and therapists), do not serve as the occasion for developing more subtle distinctions, for discovering counter-intuitive complications, or, in general, for deepening our understanding. Instead they simply serve as evidence to support —time and again—the book's relatively simple argument.

Meanwhile, Bellah gives remarkably short shrift to the huge literature on the topic of American individualism, much of which points the way toward a far richer discussion of the history of Bellah's three strands, and of the relations among and variations within them. Here, despite the fact that "our most important task today is the recovery of the insights of the older biblical and republican traditions," we get only a four-page sketch of those traditions, with little in the way of subsequent development. Perhaps this is the price we pay for the decision to depend primarily on interviews. But the interviews cannot bear the weight put upon them.

The snippets from the interviews do little to deepen or sharpen our understanding of the issue. Indeed they require some massaging to be made to support Bellah's case. For example, one of Bellah's themes is that Americans trapped in the language of individualism have great difficulty "justifying the goals of a morally good life"; when a therapist, Margaret Oldham, seems quite capable of justifying her goals, we are quickly told that her explanations are insufficient because her goals are not connected to a wider framework of common values. Similarly, individualism allegedly prevents us from giving a "substantive definition of the public good"; when a community organizer, Wayne Bauer, seems to have a reasonably clear public agenda, we are told that it is insufficient to deal with the issue of how "scarce goods should be distributed in a complex society." And when an evangelical minister, Larry Beckett, seems to have a solid non-individualistic commitment to his family, we are reminded by the authors of the limitations of evangelical Christians' grasp on their own tradition, and, later, of the fact that the tradition's norms are often "accepted unreflectively."

WHAT all of this suggests is that if one sets the implicit standard high enough, so that people are expected to be able "to define for themselves such things as the nature of success, the meaning of freedom, and the requirements of justice," any popular moral language—not only that of modern individualism—will seem lacking. This applies to Robert Bellah as well, whose own attempt "to find a moral language that will transcend" modern individualism is so vague, formalistic, and hortatory that anyone not predisposed to it would be hard put to judge it in any way superior to the language of individualism he deprecates.

It is true, as Bellah says, that the vision of freedom as "freedom from" does not much help Americans address "common conceptions of the ends of the good life." But Bellah, typically, does not himself address the ends of the good life; he does not even suggest how to address those ends; he simply suggests that "freedom might encompass an ability to share a vision of a good life or a good society with others, to debate that vision, and come to some sort of consensus." Or we are told, again and again, that "there are truths we do not see when we adopt the language of radical individualism." Here is Bellah's most comprehensive account of those truths:

> We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to the bottom of our selves on our own. We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love, and learning. All of our activity goes on in relationships, groups, associations, and communities ordered by institutional structures and interpreted by cultural patterns of meaning. Our individualism is itself one such pattern. And the positive side of our individualism, our sense of the dignity, worth, and moral autonomy of the individual, is dependent in a thousand ways on a social, cultural, and institutional context that keeps us afloat even when we cannot very well describe it. There is much in our life that we do not control, that we are not even "responsible" for, that we receive as grace or face as tragedy, things Americans habitually prefer not to think about. Finally, we are not simply ends in ourselves, either as individuals or as a society. We are parts of a larger whole that we can neither

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Charles Powers is assistant professor of sociology, Indiana University. He has published several articles on Pareto in *Sociological Theory* and *Contemporary Sociology*, among other journals.

Renata Girola is in the department of sociology, Indiana University, and she received her degree from the Universita Statale di Milano, Italy.

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forget nor imagine in our own image without paying a high price.

Here endeth the sermon.

BELLAH'S reliance on exhortation and his refusal to articulate substantive alternatives to individualism are compounded by his unwillingness seriously to discuss the difficulties with those alternatives. Bellah is everywhere alert to the tensions and ambivalences that plague individualism; the tensions and ambivalences of the biblical and republican traditions he acknowledges only to explain them away. Bellah is not willing to tolerate a revival of the illiberal aspects and implications of the non-individualist traditions: thus he stresses that he is no *simple* opponent of modern individualism. It is to be praised insofar as it has broken down barriers of discrimination and oppression supported by attitudes of moral dogmatism—insofar, for example, as it has made possible in the sphere of family life a new view of relationships between persons of the same sex, and has made possible in general "more sensitive, more open, more intense, more loving relationships." Yet modern individualism now threatens to undermine these improved relationships, so we need to reappropriate "the older civic and biblical traditions," suitably reformulated so as to be purged of illiberalism "while simultaneously remaining faithful to their own deepest insights."

Now the attempt to have the best of the modern individualist and the republican/biblical worlds is in a way a reasonable one; one might say that this desire animates much of the best American political thinking. But Bellah never offers any argument as to why we should believe that the older traditions do have the capacity to reformulate themselves while remaining faithful to their deepest insights, or how they might do so. Indeed, he never tells us to which aspects of themselves they must remain faithful, and which aspects must be reformulated. Similarly, Bellah argues that the language of individualism makes it difficult for most Americans to envision "what concrete shape and direction the public good might take in our present historical circumstances"; he suggests that if only we addressed the issue of the public good, the ends and purposes of government, "we might find that there is more basic agreement than we had imagined." But he gives no substantive indication at all of what the features of that basic argument might be, just as he never justifies his claim that "with a more explicit understanding of what we have in common and the goals we seek to attain together, the differences between us that remain would be less threatening." In this sense, Bellah is justified in claiming that in terms of present American political discourse his vision is "neither conservative nor liberal," since through most of this book his vision remains without any substance whatsoever.

In most of the book—but not all. For one can discern the political direction Bellah would have us take as we move beyond individualism. One clue is provided by the four interviewees singled out for praise for their efforts to help make our private and public worlds mutually coherent: all are involved in liberal or Left politics. In addition, it turns out that one of the charges against individualism is that it tends to blind us to "embedded inequalities of power, privilege, and esteem in a culture of self-proclaimed moral equality." And (incredibly) we are told that "the litmus test that both the biblical and republican traditions give us for assaying the health of a society is how it deals with the problem of wealth and poverty." On the basis, then, of a revived biblical/republican tradition that provides us with "a political discourse that could discuss substantive justice," we could act "to ameliorate the differences that are patently unfair while respecting differences based on morally intelligible commitments." How would we know which differences are which? Would we be likely to agree on this? Don't ask.

THE fact that *Habits of the Heart* fails to provide much in the way of serious examination of individualism and its alternatives does not of course imply that individualism ought not to be a genuine concern. But one is led to wonder whether this whole formulation of the problem—one common, incidentally, not just to Bellah but to many conservative social theorists concerned with the individualist erosion of our "moral capital"—may not be somewhat misleading. While it is true that there is a certain kinship between utilitarian and expressive individualism (a kinship embodied in the Yuppies), what is striking is that the fundamental political divide tends to run down the middle between the two individualisms.

In politics (to oversimplify matters considerably), those whom one might call the traditional communitarians tend to find themselves allied with utilitarian individualists, and the two together stand apart against progressive communitarians allied with expressive individualists. There are obviously tensions between the two groups in each alliance; but the fact of these alliances leads to the reflection that the individualist/communitarian distinction, though important, may not be fundamental, and that there may be a deeper ground of division which separates the individualists and communitarians on the Left from the individualists and communitarians on the Right.

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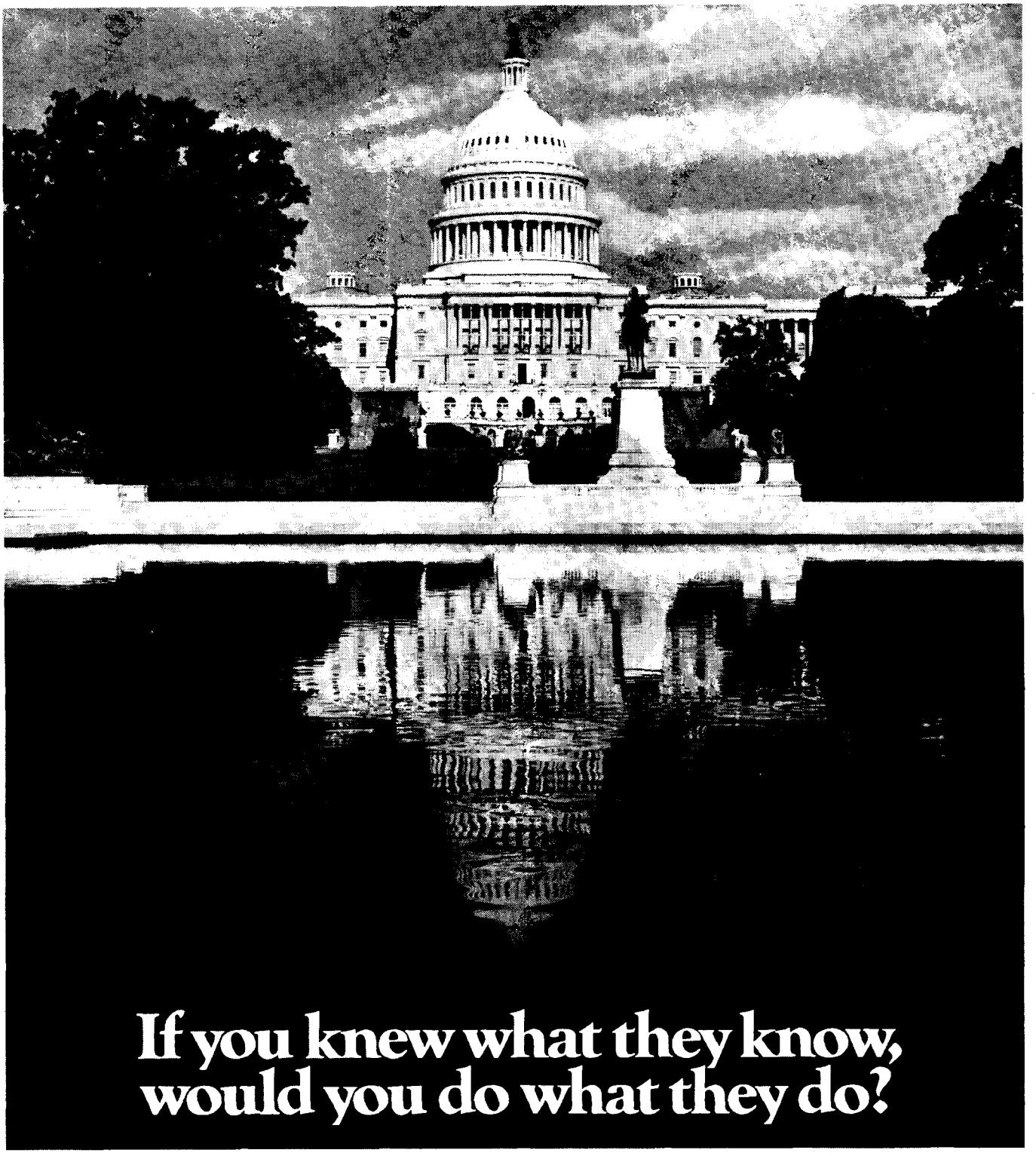

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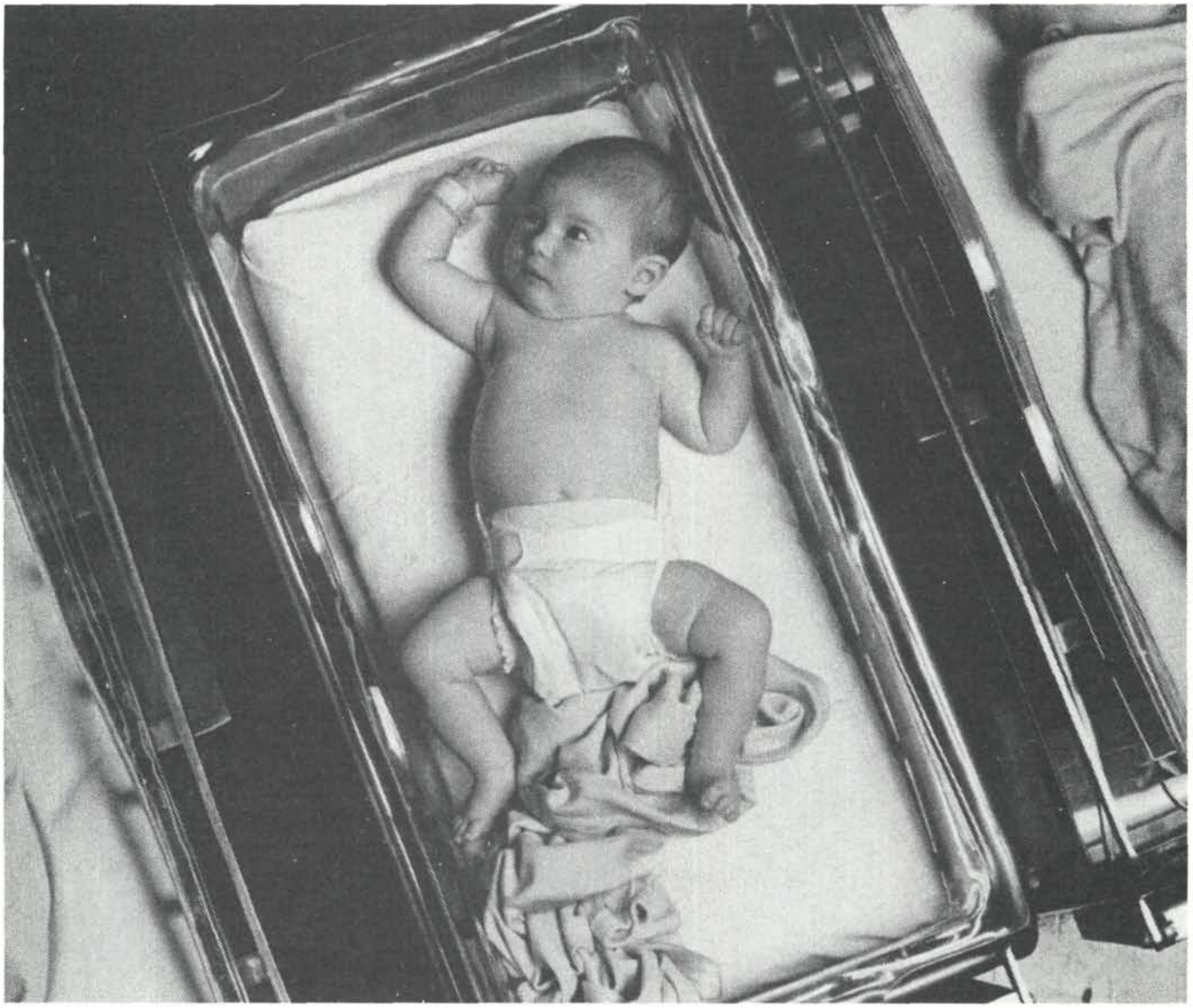

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